SECOND EDITION

CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

NORMAN L. GEISLER

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Baker Academic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 1976, 2013 by Norman L. Geisler

Published by Baker Academic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakeracademic.com

Ebook edition created 2013

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

ISBN 978-1-4412-4581-6

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To my beloved mentor
who both taught
and inspired me
in the apologetic task,
Dr. Evan Welsh

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Preface to the Second Edition

The defense never rests. We are in a new generation and a new century, but the apologetic task never ends. I count it a great privilege to revise and update this pioneer apologetic effort that has lasted more than a generation and is now bridging into a new century. I have updated all the chapters and added new ones to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. Looking back over the nearly four decades *Christian Apologetics* has been in print, I am particularly gratified to see the many great apologists, including people like Ravi Zacharias, who have been influenced by the previous edition and have carried the apologetic task to new heights and to broader widths. Trying to ponder the reasons for the durability of this text, as opposed to so many others that have been less durable, there seem to be several reasons for its longevity. First, it is a *systematic* attempt to defend the Christian faith. Second, it is *comprehensive*, covering all the basic areas of apologetics, including worldviews and tests for truth. Third, it is *logical*, treating the material step by step in its logical order. Fourth, it is *classical* in that it follows the order of many of the great apologists down through the centuries, including Augustine, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, B. B. Warfield, Kenneth Kantzer, and many others. It is a pleasure to be part of this great tradition and bequeath this enduring apologetic model to another generation.

Preface to the First Edition

This work on Christian apologetics is in three parts. Part 1 surveys various tests for truth in order to lay the groundwork for testing the truth of various worldviews. Part 2 applies the test for truth to the various worldviews and concludes that theism is the only adequate worldview. Part 3 works within the context of a theistic worldview to verify the unique claims of historical Christianity as to the deity of Christ and the authority of the Bible.

The basic movement in this apologetic has its roots from the apostles in the New Testament, was developed by Augustine, and comes to fruition in later Christians such as Thomas Aquinas. It is in essence the approach used by the old Princetonian theologians such as Warfield and Hodge in the tradition of Calvin, and it has been more popularly represented in recent times in the writings of C. S. Lewis.

The heart of this apologetic approach is that the Christian is interested in defending the truths that Christ is the Son of God and the Bible is the Word of God. However, prior to establishing these two pillars on which the uniqueness of Christianity is built, one must establish the existence of God. It makes no sense to speak about an *act* of God (i.e., a miracle) confirming that Christ is the *Son* of God and that the Bible is the *Word* of God unless, of course, there is a *God* who can have a Son and who can speak a Word. Theism, then, is a logical prerequisite to Christianity. What is more, an adequate test for truth is a methodological prerequisite to establishing theism. For unless the Christian apologist has a test by which he can show other systems to be false and theism to be true, there is no way to adjudicate the conflicting claims of various religions and worldviews. In view of this important problem, we unapologetically commit part 1 to the prior question of truth tests before attempting to defend theism (part 2) and the uniqueness of Christianity (part 3).

Abbreviations

Old Testament

Gen.	Genesis
Exod.	Exodus
Lev.	Leviticus
Num.	Numbers
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Josh.	Joshua
Judg.	Judges
Ruth	Ruth
1–2 Sam.	1–2 Samuel
1–2 Kings	1–2 Kings
1–2 Chron.	1–2 Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh.	Nehemiah
Esther	Esther
Job	Job
Ps./Pss.	Psalms
Prov.	Proverbs
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Lam.	Lamentations
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Dan.	Daniel
Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Obad.	Obadiah
Jon.	Jonah
Mic.	Micah
Nah.	Nahum
Hab.	Habakkuk
Zeph.	Zephaniah
Hag.	Haggai
Zech.	Zechariah
Mal.	Malachi

New Testament

Matt.	Matthew
Mark	Mark
Luke	Luke
John	John
Acts	Acts
Rom.	Romans
1–2 Cor.	1–2 Corinthians
Gal.	Galatians
Eph.	Ephesians
Phil.	Philippians
Col.	Colossians
1–2 Thess.	1–2 Thessalonians
1–2 Tim.	1–2 Timothy
Titus	Titus
Philem.	Philemon
Heb.	Hebrews
James	James
1–2 Pet.	1–2 Peter
1–3 John	1–3 John
Jude	Jude
Rev.	Revelation

General

ASV	American Standard Version
ca.	circa
cf.	compare
chap.	chapter
col.	collected
e.g.	for example
ESV	English Standard Version
Gk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
i.e.	that is
KJV	King James Version
Knox	Knox Version
Lat.	Latin
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
pt.	part
RSV	Revised Standard Version
sec(s).	section(s)
vol.	volume

METHODOLOGY

1
Agnosticism

There are various approaches to, or methods for, addressing the question of whether God exists—some positive and some negative. Perhaps the most widely used in the latter category is agnosticism. There are two basic kinds of agnostics: those who claim that the existence and nature of God are not known, and those who hold God to be unknowable. Since the first type does not eliminate all religious knowledge, attention here will center on the second.

The term *agnosticism* was coined by T. H. Huxley. It means literally "no-knowledge," the negation of *gnōsis* (Gk. "knowledge").[1] However, over a hundred years before Huxley the writings of David Hume and Immanuel Kant laid down the philosophical basis of agnosticism. Much of modern philosophy takes for granted the general validity of the types of arguments they set forth.

The Basic Arguments of Agnosticism

Immanuel Kant was a rationalist until he was "awakened from his dogmatic slumbers" by reading David Hume. Much of the rest of the modern world has had a similar experience.

The Skepticism of David Hume (1711–76)

Technically Hume's views are skeptical, but they serve well the agnostic aim also. Hume set forth the basis of his position in the concluding lines of his famous *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*: "If we take in our hands any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."[2] That is, any statement that is neither purely a relation of ideas (definitional or mathematical), on the one hand, nor a matter of fact (empirical), on the other hand, is meaningless. Of course, all statements about God fall outside these categories, and hence knowledge of God becomes impossible.

There Are Only Two Kinds of Propositions. At the basis of Hume's conclusion that all meaningful propositions are reducible to two kinds is a radical empiricism that may be summarized as follows. All of our knowledge or ideas are derived either through sensation or by reflection on ideas (derived from sensation) in the mind. There is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses. Furthermore, all sensations are experienced as "entirely loose and separate."[3] Causal connections are made by the mind only after one has observed a constant conjunction of things in experience. All one really experiences is a series of unconnected and separate sensations. Indeed, there is no direct knowledge even of one's "self," for all we know of ourselves is a disconnected bundle of sense impressions. It does make sense, of course, to speak of connections among ideas, even necessary connections. But these are connections made only in the mind a priori or independent of experience. A posteriori (i.e.,

from experience) there are no known and certainly no necessary connections. All matters of experience imply a possible contrary state of affairs. For anything we experience in one way could be otherwise.

Causality Is Based on Custom. Many who believe in God are willing to admit that they have no direct knowledge of God but claim nonetheless to have access to the existence and nature of God via God's effects or the things God has made or said. Hume's epistemology (theory of knowledge), if true, would seem to eliminate this possibility as well. For, according to Hume, "all reasoning concerning matters of fact seems to be founded on the relation of *cause and effect*. By means of that relation alone can we go beyond the evidence of our memory and senses?"[4]

And knowledge of the relation of cause and effect is not a priori but arises entirely from experience. And the idea of a causal relation appears in the mind only after there has been an observation of constant conjunction in experience. That is, only when we observe death to occur *after* holding another's head under the water for five minutes do we assume a causal connection. Once one event is observed to happen *after* another repeatedly, we begin to form the idea that one event happens *because* of the other. In brief, the idea of causality is based on custom.

Customary conjunction of events leads one to believe in or posit a connection between them. Of course, this connection cannot be *known* but is simply *believed* because of the repetition of the conjunctions. There is always the possibility of the post hoc fallacy—namely, that things happen after other events (even regularly) but are not really caused by them. For example, the sun rises regularly *after* the rooster crows but certainly not *because* the rooster crows. One can never know causal connections. And without a knowledge of the Cause of this world, for example, one is left in agnosticism about such a supposed God.

Knowledge of God by Analogy Is Highly Problematic. Hume believed that even if one were to grant that every event has a cause, nevertheless one cannot build any knowledge of God upon this fact because the analogy is weak at best. In his famous *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*,[5] he contended that on such an analogy, the cause of the universe may be (1) *different* from human intelligence, since human inventions differ from those of nature; (2) *finite*, since the effect is finite and one need only infer a cause adequate for the effect; (3) *imperfect*, since there are imperfections in nature; (4) *multiple*, for the creation of the world looks more like a long-range trial and error product of many cooperating deities; (5) *male and female*, since this is how humans generate; and (6) *anthropomorphic*, with hands, nose, eyes, and so forth, such as the creatures of this cause have. Since no theist will admit that analogy leads to these anthropomorphic deities, it leaves us in skepticism about the nature of any supposed Cause of the world.

The Agnosticism of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

The writings of Hume had a profound influence on the thinking of Kant. Before reading them, Kant held a form of rationalism in the tradition of Leibniz. Gottfried Leibniz and Charles Wolfe believed reality was rationally knowable and that theism was demonstrable. They followed a long line of Western thinkers from Plato through Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, who held that there were proofs for the existence of God. It was the pen of Kant that put an abrupt end to much of this thinking in the philosophical world.

The Impossibility of Knowing Reality. On the one hand, Kant granted to the rational tradition of Leibniz that there was a rational, a priori dimension to knowledge—namely, that the *form* of all knowledge is independent of experience. On the other hand, Kant granted Hume and the empiricists

their basic contention that the content of all knowledge came via the senses. The "stuff" of knowledge is provided by the senses, but the structure of knowledge is attained eventually in the mind. This creative synthesis solved the problem of rationalism and empiricism. However, the unhappy result of this synthesis is agnosticism, for if one cannot know anything until *after* it is structured by the a priori forms of sensation (time and space) and the categories of understanding (such as unity and causality), then there is no way to know what it really was *before* it was so structured, because there is no way to get outside one's own being. That is, I can know what something is *to-me* but never what it is *in-itself*. Only appearance can be known, not reality. In Kant's words, we know the *phenomena* but not the *noumena*. There is a great, impassable gulf between the real world and our knowledge of it; we must remain agnostic about reality. We know only *that* it is there; we can never know *what* it is.[6]

The Antinomies of Human Reason. There is another argument for Kant's agnostic conclusion. Not only is there an unbridgeable gulf between knowing and being, between the categories of our understanding and the nature of reality, but there are also the inevitable contradictions that result once we begin to trespass the boundary line. In other words, when we take the necessary forms of sensation or categories of understanding, such as the principle of causality, and apply them to reality, we run headlong into unavoidable contradictions.[7]

There is, for instance, the antinomy of *time*. If we assume that the form of sensation known as time (the "when-ness" with which we time-bound creatures sense things) applies to reality, we must conclude the following contradictions. On the one hand, if the world had a beginning in time, then an infinity of moments must have elapsed before the world began. But this is impossible because an infinity of moments can never be completed. On the other hand, if the world did not have a beginning in time, then there must have been a time before time began—which is impossible. But either the world began in time or it did not, and both positions are impossible. Hence, by applying time to reality one eventuates necessarily in contradictions. And since contradictions do not yield knowledge, reality is unknowable.

Another antinomy concerns the category of *causality*. On the one hand, not every cause can have a cause, or else a series of causes would never begin to cause—which they, in fact, do. On the other hand, if everything had a cause, then there could not be a beginning cause, and the causal series must stretch back infinitely. But it is impossible that the series be both infinite and also have a beginning. Such is the impossible paradox resulting from the application of the category of causality to reality.

There is also the antinomy of *contingency*. We must posit that not everything is contingent; otherwise there would be no basis or condition for contingency. On the contrary, everything must be contingent, for necessity applies only to thought and not to things, since any state of affairs could be otherwise. But again, reality cannot be both contingent and necessary. The way to avoid such contradiction is to acknowledge that reason cannot know reality—namely, to be agnostic.

These arguments do not exhaust the agnostic's arsenal, but they do lie at the heart of the contention that God cannot be known. However, even some who are unwilling to admit to the validity of these arguments opt for a more subtle form of agnosticism. Such is the case with the school of thought to which we turn our attention next: logical positivism.

The "Acognosticism" of A. J. Ayer (1910–89)

Following up on Hume's distinction between definitional and empirical statements, Ayer offered the principle of empirical verifiability. This affirmed that in order for statements to be meaningful they must be either analytic (Hume's "relation of ideas") or synthetic (Hume's "matter of fact")—that

is, definitional or empirical.[8] The former are devoid of content and say nothing about the world; the latter have content but tell us nothing about any alleged reality beyond the empirical world. Furthermore, the latter are only probable in nature and are never philosophically certain. They are useful in empirical and practical matters but not at all informative about reality in any metaphysical sense. This view we have labeled "acognosticism," since it insists that all statements about reality are noncognitive.

All God-Talk Is Nonsense or Empty. The result of Ayer's logical positivism is as devastating to theism as is traditional agnosticism. God is unknowable and inexpressible. It is even meaningless to use the term *God*. Hence, even traditional agnosticism is untenable, since the agnostic assumes that it is meaningful to ask the question whether God exists. For Ayer, the word *God*, or any transcendent equivalent, has no meaning. Hence, it is impossible to be an agnostic. The term *God* is neither analytic nor synthetic; that is, it is neither offered by theists as an empty, contentless definition corresponding to nothing in reality nor filled with empirical content, since "God" is allegedly a supra-empirical being. Hence, it is literally nonsense to talk about God.

It is true that Ayer later revised his principle of verifiability.[9] But even in advancing this form (which admitted the possibility that some empirical experiences are certain, such as single sensory experiences, and that there is a third kind of statement—namely, some analytic or definitional statements that are not purely arbitrary, such as his own principle of verifiability), he did not allow for the meaningfulness of God-talk. This third class would be neither true nor false nor factual but meaningfully definitional. However, Ayer believed that it was "unlikely that any metaphysician would yield to a claim of this kind," even though he acknowledged that for "an effective elimination of metaphysics, it needs to be supported by detailed analyses of particular metaphysical arguments."[10] In short, even a revised principle of empirical verifiability would make it impossible to utter meaningfully true statements about a transempirical reality such as God. There is no cognitive knowledge of God; we must remain "a-cog-nostic."

"God" Is Inexpressible or Mystical. Following a tip from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, Ayer held that while God might be *experienced*, such an experience could never be meaningfully *expressed*. Wittgenstein believed that "*how* things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself *in* the world." For "there are indeed things that cannot be put in words. . . . They are what is mystical," and "what we cannot speak about we must consign to silence." If God could express himself in our words, it would indeed be "a book to explode all books," but such is impossible.[11] Hence, not only is there no propositional revelation, but there are also no cognitively meaningful statements that can be made about any alleged or real transcendent being. Hence, whether one takes the more strict logical positivist's principle of verifiability or even the broader Wittgensteinian linguistic limitations, God-talk is metaphysically meaningless.

To be sure, as Wittgenstein taught, language games are possible, even religious language games. God-talk can and does occur, but it is not metaphysical; it tells us nothing about the existence and nature of a being beyond this world. About this we must, because of the very necessary limitations of language, remain silent. In summary, for religious noncognitivists, such as Ayer and Wittgenstein, metaphysical acognosticism is the net result of language analysis.

It makes little difference to Christians or theists whether they cannot *know* God (as in Kant) or whether they cannot *speak* of God (as in Ayer). Both traditional agnosticism and contemporary acognosticism leave us in the same dilemma philosophically: there are no bases for making true statements about God.

Religious Beliefs Are Unfalsifiable. The other side of the principle of verifiability is that of falsifiability. Taking his cue from John Wisdom's parable of the invisible gardener who is never seen or detected in any way, Antony Flew posed a challenge to believers as follows: "What would have to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?"[12] One cannot allow anything to count for a belief in God without being willing to allow something to count against it. Whatever is meaningful is also falsifiable. There is no difference between an invisible, undetectable gardener and no gardener at all. Likewise, a God who does not make a verifiable or falsifiable difference is no God at all. Unless the believer can indicate how the world would be different if there were no God at all, the believer cannot use conditions in the world as evidence that there is a God. In short, it would appear that a theist who cannot answer the challenge head-on must have what R. M. Hare called a "blik."[13] That is to say, such a theist has an unfalsifiable belief in God despite all facts or states of affairs. It matters little whether the believer calls the "blik" a parable, a myth, or whatever; the fact remains that the believer is acognostic, having no meaningful or verifiable knowledge of God, and this is little or no improvement on Kant's traditional agnosticism.

The Postmodernism of Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) and Paul-Michel Foucault (1926–84)

Postmodernism is often viewed as a reaction to modernism. Some see it as a form of extreme modernism. Basically, it is a radical kind of relativism that denies absolute truth, meaning, and interpretation.

Forerunners. The premodern world (before 1650) stressed metaphysics. The modern period (1650–1950) emphasized epistemology, and the postmodern (1950–present) is focused on hermeneutics. The differences have been expressed in terms of an umpire:

- Premodern umpire: "I call 'em like they are."
- Modern umpire: "I call 'em like I see 'em."
- Postmodern umpire: "They ain't nothin' till I call 'em."

The forerunners of postmodernism include Hume's radical empiricism, Kant's agnosticism, Kierkegaard's fideism, Nietzsche's atheism, Frege's conventionalism, Wittgenstein's noncognitivism, Husserl's phenomenologicalism, Heidegger's existentialism, and William James's pragmatism. The postmodernists Jacques Derrida and Paul-Michel Foucault added to this a form of deconstructionism, in which the reader deconstructs the meaning of the author and reconstructs his or her own meaning.

The Reaction to Modernism. Postmodernism can be seen as a reaction to modernism in the following ways:

Modernism	**Postmodernism**
Unity of thought	Diversity of thought
Rational	Social and psychological
Conceptual	Visual and poetical
Truth is absolute	Truth is relative
Exclusivism	Pluralism
Foundationalism	Antifoundationalism

Epistemology	Hermeneutics
Certainty	Uncertainty
Author's meaning	Reader's meaning
Structure of the text	Deconstructing the text
The goal of knowing	The journey of knowing

The Result of Postmodernism. Postmodernism is an outworking of Nietzschian atheism. If there is no Absolute Mind (God), then there is

1. no absolute (objective) truth (epistemological relativism),
2. no absolute meaning (semantical relativism),
3. no absolute history (reconstructionism).

And if there is no Absolute Author, then there is

4. no absolute writing (textual relativism),
5. no absolute interpretation (hermeneutical relativism).

And if there is no Absolute Thinker, then

6. there is no absolute thought (philosophical relativism),
7. there are no absolute laws of thought (antifoundationalism).

If there is no Absolute Purposer, then there is

8. no absolute purpose (teleological relativism).

If there is no Absolute Good, then there is

9. no absolute right or wrong (moral relativism).

In brief, postmodernism is a form of total relativism and subjectivism. At its base, it is a form of antifoundationalism. Foundationalism stressed

1. Law of Existence: "Being is" (i.e., something exists);
2. Law of Identity: "Being is being" (B is B);
3. Law of Noncontradiction: "Being is not nonbeing" (B is not non-B);
4. Law of Excluded Middle: "Either Being or nonbeing" (Either B or non-B);
5. Law of Causality: "Nonbeing cannot cause being" (Non-B $\not\rightarrow$ being),
6. Law of Analogy: "An effect is similar to its efficient cause" (B→b).[14]

As antifoundationalist, postmodernism rejects these basic principles of thought. With them it also rejects the correspondence view of truth—that all true statements correspond to reality. Without this foundation and correspondence, one is left in complete agnosticism.

An Evaluation of Agnostic Arguments

As was indicated earlier, there are two forms of agnosticism. The weak form simply holds that God is unknown—that is, that we do not know God. This leaves the door open to the possibility that one may know God and indeed that some do know God. This kind of agnosticism therefore forms no threat to Christian theism. The second or strong form of agnosticism is mutually exclusive with Christianity. It claims that God is unknowable—that is, that God *cannot* be known. Even here one must make an important distinction before embarking on a critique. There is unlimited and limited agnosticism about God. The former claims that God and all reality is completely unknowable. The latter claims only that God is partially unknowable because of the limitations of humanity's finitude and sinfulness. We will take it that the latter form of agnosticism is both possible and desirable. Paul wrote, "For now we see in a mirror dimly. . . . Now I know in part" (1 Cor. 13:12 RSV).

This leaves us with three basic alternatives with respect to knowledge about God. First, we can know nothing about God; God is unknowable. Second, we can know everything about God; God is completely and exhaustively knowable. Third, we can know something about God but not everything; God is partially knowable. The first position we will call agnosticism; the second, dogmatism; and the last, realism. Now it is evident that the dogmatic position is untenable. One would have to be God in order to know God exhaustively. Finite humanity can have only a finite knowledge of the infinite, not an infinite knowledge. Few if any informed believers have seriously held this kind of dogmatism. However, theists sometimes argue against agnosticism as though *partial* agnosticism is wrong too. They argue that agnosticism is wrong simply because one cannot *know* something is unknowable about reality without thereby implying a knowledge about that something. But this is faulty reasoning. There is no contradiction in saying, "I know enough about reality to affirm that there are some things about reality that I cannot know." For example, we can know enough about observation and reporting techniques to say that it is impossible for us to know the exact population of the world at a given instant (unknowability in *practice*). Likewise, one may know enough about the nature of finitude to say that it is impossible for human beings to know exhaustively an infinite being (who could not be exhaustibly knowable in *principle* for finite humanity as we know humanity). In the following critique, we will be concerned only with the *complete* agnostic, who rules out in theory and practice all knowledge of God. Such agnosticism is self-defeating.

Agnosticism Is Self-Defeating

Complete agnosticism is self-defeating; it reduces to the self-destructing assertion that "one knows enough about reality in order to affirm that nothing can be known about reality." This statement provides within itself all that is necessary to falsify itself, for one who knows *something* about reality surely cannot affirm in the same breath that *all* of reality is unknowable. And one who knows nothing whatsoever about reality has no basis whatsoever for making a statement about reality. It will not suffice to say that one's knowledge about reality is purely and completely negative—that is, a knowledge of what reality is not. Every negative presupposes a positive; a person totally devoid of a knowledge of the "that" cannot meaningfully affirm that something is *not*-that. It follows that total agnosticism is self-defeating because it assumes some knowledge about reality in order to deny any knowledge of reality.

Some have attempted to avoid the logic of the above critique by putting their skepticism in the form of a question: "What do I know about reality?" However, this does not avoid the dilemma but merely

delays it. This question can and ought to be asked by both agnostic and Christian. But it is the *answer* that separates the agnostic from the realist. "I can know something about God" differs significantly from "I can know nothing about God." Once the answer is given in the latter form, a self-defeating assertion is made.

Neither will it help to take the mutist alternative of saying nothing, for thoughts can be as self-stultifying as assertions. The mutist cannot even think he or she knows absolutely nothing about reality without implying in that very thought some knowledge about reality.

Of course, someone may be willing to grant that knowledge about finite reality may be possible but not willing to allow any knowledge about an alleged infinite reality, such as the God of Christian theism. If so, two things should be noted. First, the position is no longer complete agnosticism, for it holds that something can be known about reality. This leaves the door open to discuss whether this reality is finite or infinite, personal or impersonal. Second, the latter discussion takes us beyond the question of agnosticism to the debate between finite godism and theism (which will be discussed later). Before we take up some of the specific arguments of agnostics, it will be helpful to further illustrate how agnosticism involves a self-defeating assertion.

Reply to Hume's Skepticism. We may reply to Hume on several levels. First, the overall skeptical attempt to suspend all judgment about reality is self-defeating, since it implies a judgment about reality. How else could one know that suspending all judgment about reality was the wisest course, unless one knew indeed that reality was unknowable? Skepticism implies agnosticism, and as was shown above, agnosticism implies some knowledge about reality. Unlimited skepticism, which commends the suspension of *all* judgments about reality, implies a most sweeping judgment about the knowability of reality. Why discourage all truth attempts, unless one knows in advance that they are futile? And how can one be in possession of this advance information without already knowing something about reality?

Second, Hume's contention that all meaningful statements are either a relation of ideas or are about matters of fact is itself neither of these. Hence, on its own grounds it would be meaningless. It could not be purely a relation of ideas, for in that case it would not be informative about reality as it purports to be. And clearly it is not purely a matter-of-fact statement, since it claims to cover more than empirical matters. In short, Hume's distinction is the basis for Ayer's empirical verifiability principle, and the verifiability principle is itself not empirically verifiable.

Third, Hume's radical empirical atomism, asserting that all events are "entirely loose and separate" and that even the self is only a bundle of sense impressions, is unfeasible. If everything were unconnected, there would be no way of making that particular statement, since some unity and connection are implied in the affirmation that everything is disconnected. Further, to affirm "*I* am nothing but the impressions about myself" is self-defeating, for there is always the assumed unity of the "I (self)" making the assertion. But one cannot assume a unified self in order to deny the same.

Reply to Kant's Agnosticism. Kant's argument that the categories of thought (such as unity and causality) do not apply to reality is unsuccessful, for unless the categories of reality correspond to those of the mind, no statements can be made about reality, including that very statement Kant made. That is to say, unless the real world were intelligible, no statement about it would apply. A preformation of the mind to reality is necessary whether one is going to say something positive about it or something negative. We cannot even *think* of reality that it is unthinkable. Now if someone should press the argument that the agnostic need not be making any statement at all about reality but is simply defining the necessary limits of what we can know, it can be shown that even this is a self-defeating attempt. To say that one cannot know any more than the limits of the phenomena or

appearance is to draw an unsurpassable line for those limits. But one cannot draw such firm limits without surpassing them. It is not possible to contend that appearance ends here and reality begins there unless one can see at least some distance on the other side. In other words, how can one know the difference between appearance and reality without already knowing both so as to make the comparison?

Another self-defeating dimension is implied within Kant's admission that he knows *that* the noumena is there but not *what* it is. Is it possible to know that something is without knowing something about what it is? Can pure that-ness be known? Does not all knowledge imply some knowledge of characteristics? Even a strange creature one had never seen before could not be observed to exist unless it had some recognizable characteristics such as size, color, or movement. Even something invisible must leave some effect or trace in order to be observed. I need not know the origin or function of a brand-new I-know-not-what. However, I must observe something of what it is or I cannot know that it is. It is not possible to affirm *that* something is without simultaneously declaring something about *what* it is. Even to describe it as the "in-itself" or the "real" is to say something. Furthermore, Kant acknowledged it to be the unknowable "source" of the appearance we are receiving. All of this is informative about the real: namely, it is the real, in-itself source of impressions we have. Even this is something less than complete agnosticism.

Reply to Ayer's Acognosticism. As has already been noted, the principle of empirical verifiability as set forth by Ayer is self-defeating, for it is neither purely definitional nor strictly factual. Hence, on its own grounds it would fall into the third category of nonsense statements. Ayer recognized this problem and engaged in recovery operations by way of a third category for which he claimed no truth value but only a useful function. Verifiability, he contended, is analytic and definitional but not arbitrary or true. It is metacognitive—that is, beyond verification as true or false but simply useful as a guide to meaning. This is a classic but ill-fated move, for two reasons. First, it no longer eliminates the possibility of making metaphysical statements. Rather, it admits that one cannot *legislate* meaning but must *look* at meaning of alleged metaphysical statements. But if it is possible that some meaningful statements can be made about reality, then we are not left with complete agnosticism and acognosticism. Second, can cognitively restrictive metacognitive statements be made without self-stultification? It seems not, for to restrict the area of what is meaningful is to limit the area of what could be true, since only the meaningful can be true. Hence, the attempt to limit meaning to the definitional or to the verifiable is to make a truth claim that must itself be subject to some test. If it cannot be tested, then it becomes an unfalsifiable view, a "blik" of its own.

Reply to Wittgensteinian Mysticism. Wittgenstein engages in a self-stultifying acognosticism. He attempts to define the limits of language in such a way as to show that it is impossible to speak cognitively about God. God is literally inexpressible, and one should not attempt to speak of that whereof one cannot speak. But Wittgenstein can be no more successful in drawing the lines of linguistic limitation than Kant was in delimiting the realm of phenomena or appearance; how can one know that God is inexpressible without thereby revealing something expressible about God? The very attempt to deny all expressions about God is an expression about God. One cannot draw the limits of language and thought without first transcending those very limits. It is self-defeating to contend that the inexpressible cannot be expressed. In like manner even to think the thought that the unthinkable cannot be thought is self-destructive. Language (thought) and reality cannot be mutually exclusive, for every attempt to completely separate them implies some interaction or commerce between them. One cannot use the scaffold of language and thought about the limits of reality only to say the scaffold

cannot be so used. If the ladder was used to get on top of the house, one cannot thereupon deny the ability of the ladder to get one there.

Reply to Flew's Principle of Falsifiability. In the narrow sense of empirical falsifiability, Flew's principle is too restrictive. Not everything need be *empirically* falsifiable. Indeed that very principle is not itself empirically falsifiable. But in the broader sense of "testable" or "arguable," surely the principle is alive and helpful, for unless there are criteria for truth and falsity, no truth claims can be supported. Everything, including opposing views, could be true. But in this case nothing can be maintained to be true (as versus what is false), for no such distinction can be made.

Furthermore, not everything that is verifiable need be falsifiable in the same manner. As John Hick pointed out, there is an asymmetrical relation between verifiability and falsifiability. I can verify my own immortality, for example, if I consciously observe my own funeral. But I cannot falsify my immortality, for if I do not survive death then I am not there to disprove my own immortality. Nor could another person falsify my immortality unless that other person were omniscient or God, for it is always possible that my existence could be somehow beyond the other person's limited knowledge. But if it is necessary to posit an omniscient mind or God, then it would be eminently self-defeating to use falsification to disprove God. So we may conclude that every truth claim must be testable or arguable but not all truth claims need be falsifiable or disconfirmable. A total state of nonexistence of anything would be unfalsifiable, for example, since there would be no one and no way to falsify it. However, the existence of something is testable by experience or inference.

Reply to Postmodernists. Some postmodernists claim not to be denying first principles, objective truth, and objective reality. They insist that they are simply ignoring them. In this case, our response is twofold.

First, if they are denying them, then they are engaged in self-defeating statements. Any attempt to deny the Law of Noncontradiction must use that law in the very denial. Likewise, any attempt to deny objective truth is itself an objective truth claim. Also, any denial of the correspondence view of truth makes the implicit claim that its view corresponds to reality—which is self-defeating.

Second, if postmodernists claim they are not denying logic or objective truth, but are just ignoring it, then two comments are relevant. One, if they are not denying knowledge of reality, then they have placed themselves outside the quest for truth. Like in a baseball game, they cannot even get on first base—let alone to home plate—unless they first get into the ballpark. But once they put themselves back in the ballpark of truth, then they cannot express their postmodern views without accepting the validity of the basic laws of thought.

Further, the claim not to be making any truth claims is bogus. As C. S. Lewis put it in another context but applicable here:

> You can argue with a man who says, "Rice is unwholesome": but you neither can nor need argue with a man who says, "Rice is unwholesome, but I'm not saying this is true." I feel that this surrender of the claim to truth has all the air of an expedient adopted at the last moment. If [they] . . . do not claim to know any truths, ought they not to have warned us rather earlier of the fact? For really from all the books they have written . . . one would have got the idea that they were claiming to give a true account of things. The fact surely is that they nearly always are claiming to do so. The claim is surrendered only when the question discussed . . . is pressed; and when the crisis is over the claim is tacitly resumed.[15]

Reply to Some Specific Agnostic Claims

Hume denied the traditional use of both causality and analogy as means of knowing the theistic God. Causality is based on custom, he said, and analogy would lead to either finite male or female gods or to a totally different God from the alleged analogue. Let us examine each of these in turn.

Causality Is Not Unjustifiable. First, Hume never denied the principle of causality. He admitted it would be absurd to maintain that things arise without a cause.[16] What he did attempt to deny is that there is any philosophical way of *establishing* the principle of causality. If the causal principle is not a mere analytic relation of ideas but is a belief based on customary conjunction of matter-of-fact events, then there is no necessity in it and one cannot use it with philosophical justification. But we have already seen that dividing all contentful statements into these two classes is self-defeating. Hence, it is possible that the causal principle is both contentful and necessary. In point of fact, the very denial of causal necessity implies some kind of causal necessity in the denial, for unless there is a necessary ground (or cause) for the denial, the denial does not necessarily stand. And if there is a necessary ground or cause for the denial, then the denial is self-defeating, for in that event it is using a necessary causal connection to deny that there are necessary causal connections.

Some have attempted to avoid the logic of the above objection by limiting necessity to the reality of logic and propositions but denying that necessity applies to reality. This will not succeed because in order for this statement to accomplish what it intends to do—namely, to exclude necessity from the realm of reality—it must itself be a necessary statement about reality. That is, it must in effect be claiming that it is necessarily true about reality that no necessary statements can be made about reality. It must make a necessary statement about reality to the effect that necessary statements cannot be made of the real. This is clearly self-canceling, for it actually does what it claims cannot be done.

Analogy Is Not Unfoundable. Likewise, there is no way Hume can deny all similarity between the world and God, for this would imply that the creation must be totally dissimilar from the Creator. It violates an undeniable first principle of thought, the Law of Analogy (#6 above): "An effect is similar to its efficient cause" (B→b). The cause cannot give what it has not got. It cannot share what it does not have to share. Hence, whatever actuality there is in an effect was given to it by its efficient cause. To deny all similarity between the world and God would be to affirm that effects must be entirely different from their cause. In actuality, this statement too is self-destructive; unless there were some knowledge of the cause there would be no basis for denying all similarity with its effect. Comparison, even a negative one, implies some positive knowledge of the terms being compared. Hence, either there is no basis for the affirmation that God must be totally dissimilar, or there can be some knowledge of God in terms of our experience, in which case God is not necessarily totally dissimilar to what we know in our experience.

One should be cautioned here about overdrawing the conclusion of these arguments. Once it has been shown that total agnosticism is self-defeating, it does not ipso facto follow that God exists or that one has knowledge of God. These arguments show only that if there is a God, one cannot maintain that he *cannot* be known. From this it follows only that God can be known, not that we do know anything about God. The disproof of agnosticism is not thereby the proof of realism or theism. In other words, agnosticism only destroys itself and makes it possible to build Christian theism. The positive case for Christian knowledge of God must be built later.

Kant's Antinomies Are Fallacious. In each of Kant's alleged antinomies there is a fallacy. One does not end in contradictions when one begins to speak about reality in terms of the necessary conditions of human thought. For instance, we need not speak of the world beginning in time, as though time were already there and there was a time before time. We may speak of the beginning of the world as the beginning of time. That is, time is a concomitant of a created world in process—in which case there would be no time before time. All that is prior to time is eternity.

It is likewise a mistake to view everything as needing a cause, for in this case there would be an infinity of causes and even God would need a cause. Only limited, changing, contingent things need

causes. Once one arrives at an unlimited, unchanging, necessary Being, there no longer is a need for a cause. The finite must be caused, but the infinite being would be uncaused.

Finally, the so-called antinomy of contingency fails as well, for everything cannot be contingent. There must indeed be a ground for contingency that is beyond the contingent—namely, the necessary. And, as was previously noted, it is self-defeating to claim that necessity applies only to thought and propositions, not to being or reality; that claim itself necessarily entails an affirmation about reality. Thought and reality cannot be radically bifurcated without being irrevocably united; there is no way to affirm their separation unless they are joined. This is not to say that the rational is the real, but it is to affirm that the real is rationally knowable.

Summary and Conclusion

There are two kinds of agnosticism: limited and unlimited. The former is no threat to Christianity but is compatible with its claim of finite knowledge of an infinite God. Unlimited agnosticism, however, is self-destructive, for it implies knowledge about reality in order to deny the possibility of any knowledge of reality. Both skepticism and noncognitivisms (acognosticism) are reducible to agnosticism, for unless it is impossible to know the real, it is unnecessary to disclaim the possibility of all cognitive knowledge of it or to dissuade humans from making any judgments about it. Skepticism and acognosticism imply agnosticism.

Finally, unlimited agnosticism is a subtle form of dogmatism. In completely disclaiming the possibility of all knowledge of the real, it stands at the opposite pole from the position that would claim all knowledge about reality. Each is equally dogmatic. Both are *must* positions regarding knowledge as opposed to the position that we *may* or *do* know something about reality. And there is simply no way short of omniscience that one can make such sweeping and categorical statements about reality, whether they are positive or negative. Agnosticism is negative dogmatism, and every negative presupposes a positive. Hence, total agnosticism is not only self-defeating but self-deifying. Only an omniscient mind could be totally agnostic, and finite human beings confessedly do not possess omniscience. Hence, the door remains open for some knowledge of reality. Reality is not unknowable.

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Exposition of Agnosticism

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2
Rationalism

The seeds of rationalism have been firmly implanted in the Western world since at least the time of Plato. In the Middle Ages, the cause was advanced by thinkers such as Avicenna and scholastics such as Duns Scotus. But the movement flowered in the modern triumvirate of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. Rationalism is characterized by its stress on the innate or a priori ability of human reason to know truth. Basically, rationalists hold that what is knowable or demonstrable by human reason is true.

An Exposition of Rationalism

Rationalism can be most easily understood by contrast with empiricism. The former stresses the *mind* in the knowing process and the latter lays emphasis on the *senses*. In the ancient world, these emphases were found respectively in Plato and Aristotle. In modern times Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are the chief exponents of rationalism, whereas John Locke, George Berkeley, and Hume are the prime examples of empiricism.

Along with its stress on the mind, rationalism holds that there is an a priori aspect to human knowledge—that is, something independent of sense experience. By contrast, empiricists stress the a posteriori, or what comes through empirical experience. In like manner, rationalists argue for innate ideas or principles, whereas empiricists believe that the mind is a tabula rasa, or blank slate, on which sense experience writes its impressions.

It is not uncommon for empiricism to lead to skepticism or materialism, as in Hume and Hobbes, but rationalists tend to argue for the existence of God. Characteristic of a rationalist's approach to God is the ontological argument, from the idea of a perfect or necessary Being. However, empiricists who are theists tend to support their belief in God with the cosmological argument, from the world to a cause beyond the world.

Perhaps the best way to understand rationalism is to see how it unfolded in its major representatives in the modern world. Each has his distinctiveness, but all exemplify the movement generally.

René Descartes (1596–1650)

Amid a period of increasing skepticism and doubt, Descartes felt called to bring certainty into philosophy. Since in Descartes's day mathematics and particularly geometry held out most promise in this direction, Descartes applied the mathematical method to human reasoning. The result was what may be called a geometric epistemology. In order to arrive at demonstrable conclusions, one must have unquestioned premises or axioms and must from these deduce logically irrefutable conclusions. But where is one to find these archimedean axioms in the flux of doubt? Descartes's answer to this is

both fascinating and illustrative of a classic rationalistic move. Doubt is a negative form of thought. And the more we doubt, the more certain we are of one thing—namely, that we are doubting. Complete doubt would bring complete certainty that one was thinking. I doubt; therefore, I am thinking. But if one is thinking, one must be a thinking thing. Thus he moves from the *dubito* to the *cogito* to *sum*, from "I doubt" to "I think" to "I am." The indubitable starting point or axiom is that one is both a doubting and a thinking being.[17]

The mind is a thinking thing, and this cannot be doubted. But what of the body? According to Descartes the body is an extended thing, and this can be doubted. The senses deceive us, and we could be merely dreaming about our body and the physical world. Indeed a malevolent demon may be deceiving us about the world. Just how Descartes overcomes this sensory doubt is an instructive lesson in a classic rationalistic move. Since the only thing of which he is certain is the existence of his own mind, Descartes moves next to prove the existence of God. Then, on the grounds that God would not deceive us, Descartes attempts to demonstrate the existence of an external world of bodies.

Descartes offers two proofs for God, and both are rationalistic. His a posteriori proof begins in doubt and thought.[18] I doubt. But if I doubt, I am imperfect, for a lack of knowledge is an imperfection. But if I know what is imperfect, I must have knowledge of the perfect; otherwise I would not know it is not perfect. However, knowledge of the perfect cannot arise from an imperfect mind, since there cannot be an imperfect source or basis of what is perfect. Therefore there must be a perfect Mind (God) who is the origin of the idea of perfection I have. The rationalistic character of this argument is not difficult to detect. The proof begins in the mind, then proceeds by a rational deduction to the conclusion that a perfect Mind exists.

The second proof Descartes offers is an a priori ontological argument in the tradition of Anselm. It may be summarized as follows.[19] Whatever is necessary to the essence of a thing cannot be absent from that thing. For example, a triangle must have three sides. Devoid of three sides, it would not be a triangle. Now existence or being is necessary to the nature of a necessary Being. Without existence it would not be by nature a necessary existent. It follows, then, that a necessary Being must necessarily exist, for if it did not exist, it would not be by nature a necessary Being. God's existence is logically necessary to affirm. Descartes's other statement of this argument reveals the same rationalistic character. The idea of an absolutely perfect Being cannot be devoid of any perfection. If it were, the idea would not be of what is absolutely perfect. But existence is a necessary element in the idea of an absolutely perfect Being. Anything lacking existence is lacking in perfection. Hence, an absolutely perfect Being must exist, for if it did not exist, the idea we have would not be of an absolutely perfect Being. Not only is this second proof undertaken strictly in the realm of the mind, but it also illustrates the innate, a priori stress on conceptual necessity in the reasoning process. God's existence is conceptually or rationally inescapable.

Beneath the above argument lies a geometrical method of truth. Whatever is a clear and distinct idea (such as the indubitable ones) is true. (These are known intuitively; everything else is deducible from them.) Sensations and unclear ideas are not true. Errors arise not in the mind but in the will. Errors result when we *judge* to be true what the mind does not clearly *know* to be true. The corrective for error is found in four rules of valid thinking. First, the rule of *certainty* states that only indubitably clear and distinct ideas should be accepted as true. Second, the rule of *division* affirms that problems must be reduced first to their simplest parts. Third, the rule of *order* declares that we must proceed in our reasoning from the simplest to the most complex. Finally, the rule of *enumeration* demands that we check and recheck each step of the argument to make sure no mistake has been made.[20] By

following this method, Descartes was assured that error could be overcome and certainty could be attained in our knowledge of God.

Baruch Spinoza (1632–77)

Spinoza was a younger contemporary of Descartes. Unlike Descartes, he was brought by his rationalistic method to pantheistic conclusions rather than to Christian theism. Spinoza's method, however, is even more rigidly geometric than Descartes's. He begins his work by setting forth eight definitions, seven axioms, and thirty-six propositions. Everything else is geometrically deduced from these.

The starting point of Spinoza is also different. Rather than beginning in methodological doubt in order to anchor the *indubitable idea*, Spinoza begins with the absolutely *perfect idea* of an absolutely perfect Being. He rejects both hearsay and conventional signs as guides to truth, along with the undisciplined experience of empiricists. These are unreliable in that they never attain the true nature or essence of things. Even scientific inferences approach the essence of things only indirectly. For an essential knowledge of things, we must exercise direct rational insight into the very essence of reality. In this way the mind can be united with the whole of nature and be healed of the injury or error. The most suitable method for engaging in this pursuit is by meditating on the absolutely perfect Idea of God. To begin anywhere short of the perfect Idea is to end in imperfection.[21]

For Spinoza error has four causes: the partial nature of our minds, which provide only fragmentary expressions of ideas; our imagination, which is affected by the physical senses and confuses us; our reasoning, which is often too abstract and general; and, above all, the failure to begin with the perfect Idea of God. The geometric method is the remedy for error because it aids the weak mind, it is impersonal, and it yields conclusions that are proved (QED, meaning *quod erat demonstrandum*, "which was to be proved"). Furthermore, the more we feed on the perfect Idea, the more perfect we become, and the inner growth that results helps one distinguish clear ideas from confused sensations.

When Spinoza's method is applied to God, it yields for him the following results. First, in accordance with the traditional movement of the ontological proof, he argues that God must be conceived as a Being in and of himself, existing necessarily and independently. Anything less than this is inadequate and less than perfect. The first form of his argument runs as follows. A necessary Being must necessarily exist unless there is a cause adequate to explain why it does not exist, for everything must have a cause either for its existence or for its nonexistence. There clearly is no cause adequate to explain why a necessary Being does not exist. But since nothing either inside or outside a necessary Being could possibly annul it, there is no cause adequate to explain God's nonexistence. Hence, God must necessarily exist.

Spinoza's second argument for God begins with the affirmation that something necessarily exists. This he holds to be rationally inescapable, for even when one attempts to deny that anything exists, he must affirm his own existence in so doing. But this existence must be either infinite or finite. And since everything must have a cause, there must be an adequate cause as to why this existence is not infinite. That no finite existence can hinder it being infinite, it follows that this existence must be infinite.

The rationalistic method of Spinoza does not end in theism but in pantheism; the infinite substance must be one, since it is impossible to have many infinite beings, and finites are no more than many modes or moments of an infinite substance. All thoughts and attributes flow from the unity of this one substance with necessity just as 180 degrees flows necessarily from the nature of a triangle. And the

effects (creation) are just as infinite as the cause (Creator). Indeed, the world with all its degrees of perfection (and corresponding imperfection) is both a necessary outflow from God and the best world possible. Viewing the world fragmentarily or segmentally leads to the misconception of evil. The world must be viewed as a whole, and the whole is both good and God in his multitudinous manifestations.

Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716)

The last and perhaps most influential of the rationalistic theists was Leibniz. His particular brand of rationalism, as developed by Christian Wolff, has been the modern world's chief example of rational theism. It is to the Leibniz-Wolffian theism that Kant reacted, and it has been subject to constant criticism since his day.

Unlike Descartes, Leibniz's approach is not exclusively a rational one. He does not begin simply with an a priori analysis of ideas but with an examination of scientific findings from experience. He views the world as a grouping of simple natures (monads) in a calculus of combination possessing overall harmony by way of God.[22] However, Leibniz's rationalism becomes apparent as he proceeds to argue for the existence of God by way of the principle of sufficient reason. The basis of Descartes's rationalism was a clear or *indubitable* idea; Spinoza's was the *perfect* idea, but Leibniz bases his thoughts on God around the *sufficient* idea or reason.

There are several innate principles in the human mind that are not derived from the senses. First, the principle of sufficient reason says that nothing is without a reason; that is, everything has a reason or cause. This is the ground of all true propositions, and it is known to be true analytically. One cannot deny it without using it. That is, a person must have a sufficient reason for even denying the principle of sufficient reason, in which case he or she affirms it in the process of denying it. Second, there is the Law of Noncontradiction or identity, which affirms that something must be itself and cannot be other than itself. While sufficient reason regulates all truth, contradiction and identity determine or establish necessary truths. That is, identity is the sufficient reason for all necessary truths. Third, the principle of perfection or the principle of the best holds for all contingent truths; that is, since God is most perfect and wise, he is morally (though not logically) obligated to create the best of all possible worlds. Finally, there are the principles of order, including continuity and reaction. In brief, these principles hold that the best world has no "gaps" but is a plenum (fullness) of different substances (monads). Breaks would violate the harmony of science. There is ultimate (mathematical) intelligibility in the universe. It is with the aid of these and other rational principles that Leibniz constructs his rationalistic theism.

The Leibnizian argument for the existence of God amply illustrates the thinker's rationalistic methodology in both his ontological and cosmological proofs for God's existence. First, Leibniz argued (as had Anselm and Descartes), that if it is possible for an absolutely perfect Being to exist, then it is necessary for it to exist.[23] By definition of its very nature an absolutely perfect Being cannot lack anything. And if it cannot lack anything, it surely cannot lack existence. And it is indeed possible or noncontradictory for God to possess absolutely all possible perfections, since perfections are irreducibly simple and therefore compatible qualities. That is, since there is no area of "overlap" with simple characteristics, there can be no conflict among them; they can all exist harmoniously in God. It must be concluded, then, that an absolutely perfect Being must exist; the very possibility of an absolutely perfect Being ensures its necessity. Reason demands God.

Leibniz's cosmological-type argument is likewise rationalistic.[24] By experience, we know that the entire observed universe is changing. But whatever changes lacks within itself the reason for its own existence. And yet there is a sufficient reason for everything either in itself or beyond itself. But since the world has not the sufficient reason for itself in itself in that it changes, there must be beyond the world a sufficient reason or cause for its existence. Further, there cannot be an infinite regress of sufficient reasons, for the failure to reach an explanation is not an explanation. But the principle of sufficient reason demands that there be an explanation. Therefore, it is rationally necessary to conclude that there is a First Cause of the world that is its own sufficient reason for existing.

Several distinctively rationalistic aspects about this argument should be noted. First, although it *begins* with sense experience, its conclusion is *based* on an analytical a priori principle of reason. Second, the principle of sufficient reason at the heart of the argument is held to be analytically true independent of experience. Third, "cause" is understood in terms of "reason" and "explanation," not distinctly as an ontological "ground" or "basis." Fourth, notice also the difference between Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason and, say, Thomas Aquinas's principle of existential causality. Aquinas says that only finite, changing, or contingent beings need a cause. Leibniz says *everything* needs a reason. Further, Leibniz uses "cause" and "reason" somewhat interchangeably, whereas Aquinas considered a cause to be an ontological ground, not a rational explanation. Finally, by logical reduction, Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason leads to a self-caused God, since everything must have a reason or cause, including God. Hence, God must be his own cause. Aquinas's principle of the cause of existence leads to an uncaused Cause. If only finite things need causes, an infinite being (God) would not need a cause but would be uncaused. The Leibnizian principle is distinctively rationalistic by comparison with the Thomistic one. And it is noteworthy to observe that the fate of the cosmological argument in the modern world in the hands of Kant and followers has been largely identified with the Leibnizian rationalistic argument.

Stuart Hackett (1925–2012): Theistic Rationalism

Modern and contemporary Christian thought has not been without its strong strains of rationalism. Perhaps the best example of contemporary evangelical rationalism is Stuart Hackett's *The Resurrection of Theism*.[25] Hackett titles his view "rational empiricism," but it might with equal justice be called "empirical rationalism," since he claims rational certainty for knowledge about God's existence and nature derived from sense experience.

The Rejection of Kant's Agnosticism. Hackett agrees with Kant that the *content* of all knowledge comes via the senses and that the *form* of knowledge is finalized by the a priori categories of the mind. He disagrees, however, with Kant's agnostic conclusions. Kant was wrong in rejecting the preformation of the mind to reality. There must be a correspondence between the categories of the mind and reality, he argues, because the position that denies this "is self-contradictory and reduces to skepticism." The assertion "that the categories yield no knowledge of things-in-themselves would be an unintelligible proposition if it were not false; since it assumes the very knowledge of noumenal reality which it denies." It follows, then, that "the denial of the synthetic a priori is either self-contradictory or meaningless." That is, contrary to empiricism, which affirms that all contentful knowledge is based on sensation and cannot be known with certitude, it is logically necessary to maintain that the categories of the mind (such as unity and causality) are informative about reality. In fact, "every attempt to derive the categories from the data of experience presupposes their use in the attempted derivation." One cannot deny that there are universal and necessary truths, for "this

proposition itself . . . is either true or false. If the proposition is false, it is refuted at once. Suppose then it is true." Hackett adds that "in this case, since it asserts, or better denies, the predicate universally and necessarily, it is, by its own criterion, false—which is self-contradictory."[26] And since by logical necessity the opposite of the false must be true, it is logically necessary to conclude that the innate categories of the mind do inform man about the noumenal, or real, world.

Rational Proof for God's Existence. Having laid the ground for theism in his rational realism, Hackett turns his attention to proving the existence of God. It is impossible to deny the existence of everything, because the one making the denial "at least exists to effect the denial, which is therefore self-contradictory." Now what exists is either an effect or not. If not, then we have already arrived at an absolutely necessary Being. But if it is an effect, "its character and being must therefore, by definition, be determined by antecedent and contemporaneous existences external to itself. . . . But an infinite number of successive causes and effects . . . is rationally inconceivable." It follows, then, that "whether a given entity is an effect or not, we rationally conclude the existence of an absolutely necessary being."[27]

This argument is elaborated and defended with a great deal of rational sophistication, after which Hackett summarizes the important things about it. "In the first place, it rests upon that very a priori structure of rationality with which the mind approaches the experience and without which intelligible experience itself does not exist." And "in the second place, the argument has likewise an a posteriori or existential premise; for it reasons to the existence of an absolutely necessary being from the granted reality of some particular entity of experience." Finally, "the sum of the whole matter is this: that rationality and experience have together established the existence of an absolutely infinite being that transcends the world of experience and is its only sufficient explanation."[28] In brief, it is rationally inescapable to conclude God's existence because it is logically necessary to conclude both that our minds correspond to reality and that there must be in reality an absolutely necessary Being (God).

Gordon Clark (1902–85): Revelational Rationalism

There is yet another kind of evangelical rationalism. It claims no rationally inescapable arguments. Indeed, it disavows all such. "As a recourse for Christian theism," Gordon Clark writes, "the cosmological argument is worse than useless. In fact Christians can be pleased at its failure, for if it were valid, it would prove a conclusion inconsistent with Christianity."[29] Hume and Kant put theistic rationalism to rest over 150 years ago.

The Need for Presuppositions. The failure of all philosophical attempts to establish truth either secular or religious points up the need for a Christian presupposition. "The various systems all fail on the two points at which failure is fatal. First, they do not furnish a systematic, consistent set of universal principles." Second, "they give no guidance in making concrete decisions of everyday living. . . . Failing thus both theoretically and practically, the failure is complete."[30]

From this, Clark draws two conclusions: "The first is that no construction in philosophy is possible without some sort of presupposition or a priori equipment." The second conclusion is "that the secular philosophers who use presuppositions have not selected those which can solve their problem." To this Clark adds "a third conclusion, or at least a hypothesis for consideration. It is that revelation should be accepted as our axiom, seeing that other presuppositions have failed."[31]

Testing the Christian Presupposition. Clark admits that the proposition that "revelation should be accepted without proofs or reasons, undeduced from something admittedly true, seems odd when first

proposed." Nevertheless, he feels "it will not seem so odd . . . when the nature of axioms is kept in mind," for "axioms, whatever they may be and in whatever subject they are used, are never deduced from more original principles. They are always tested in another way." Every philosopher makes a voluntary choice of his axioms. "Axioms, because they are axioms, cannot be deduced from or proved by previous theorems." What we must ask with respect to the axiom of the propositional revelation of Scripture is the following: "Does revelation make knowledge possible? Does revelation establish values and ethical norms? Does revelation give a theory of politics? And are all these results consistent with one another?" In short, "we can judge the acceptability of an axiom by its success in producing a system."[32] Logical consistency is the essence of truth, and logical contradiction is the core of falsity.

The Status and Defense of the Law of Noncontradiction. According to Clark, "the denial of the Law of Noncontradiction, or even the failure to establish it as a universal truth, was the downfall of secular philosophy." Even the intelligibility of the Scriptures presupposes logic. But this does not mean that logic should be conceived as an axiom prior to or separate from Scripture. Logic is embedded in Scripture and Scripture is the logically consistent thoughts of God expressed in verbal form. John's prologue should be translated, "In the beginning was Logic, and Logic was with God, and Logic was God." This should not sound offensive to the Christian, because the Word is the expression or thought of God. Therefore, "the law of contradiction is not to be taken as an axiom prior to or independent of God. The law is God thinking." In this sense, "if one should say that logic is dependent on God's thinking, it is dependent only in the sense that it is the characteristic of God's thinking." It is not subsequent temporally, "for God is eternal and there was never a time when God existed without thinking logically." Hence, logic is to be considered as an activity of God's mind.[33]

Clark believed "it is strange that anyone who thinks he is a Christian should deprecate logic. . . . The law of contradiction cannot be sinful" simply because man's mind is fallen. "Quite the contrary, it is our violations of the law of contradiction that are sinful." He asks, "Can such pious stupidity really mean that a syllogism which is valid for us is invalid for God? If two plus two is four in our arithmetic, does God have a different arithmetic in which two and two make three or perhaps five?" Nonsense. "To avoid this irrationalism, which of course is a denial of the divine image, we must insist that truth is the same for God and man." For "if we know anything at all, what we must know must be identical with what God knows. . . . It is absolutely essential therefore to insist that there is an area of coincidence between God's mind and our mind."[34]

The Relation of Scripture and Logic. Clark concludes that "since secular philosophy had failed to solve its problems, the alternative hypothesis of revelation, verbal communication, the Bible was proposed." In this, we may anticipate the relation of logic to the Scripture. "First of all, Scripture, the written words of the Bible, is the mind of God. What is said in Scripture is God's thought," for "the Bible consists of thoughts, not paper; and the thoughts are the thoughts of the omniscient, infallible God" and, "as might be expected, if God has spoken, he has spoken logically. The Scripture therefore should and does exhibit logical organization." Further, "this exhibition of the logic embedded in Scripture explains why Scripture rather than the law of contradiction is selected as the axiom." For "this *sine qua non* is not sufficient to produce knowledge. Therefore the law of contradiction as such and by itself is not made the axiom of this argument." Even God is not the axiom, for "'God' as an axiom, apart from Scripture, is just a name. We must specify which God." Spinoza began with the axiom of a pantheistic God. Other axioms that define God in other ways are possible. "Therefore the Scripture is offered here as the axiom. This gives definiteness and content, without which axioms are useless. Thus it is that God, Scripture, and logic are tied together."[35]

All non-Christian worldviews are ultimately self-contradictory. For example, skepticism refutes itself because it is internally self-contradictory. If skepticism is true, it is false. This "method of procedure stresses coherence or self-consistency, and the implication of each position must be traced out to the end. A *reductio ad absurdum* would be the test." And if there seem to be two systems fairly coherent, then one must choose between them with regard to "the widest possible consistency." Of course, "no philosopher is perfect and no system can give man omniscience. But if one system can provide plausible solutions to many problems while another leaves too many questions unanswered, if one system tends less to skepticism and gives more meaning to life," or "if one world view is consistent while others are self-contradictory, who can deny us, since we must choose, the right to choose the more promising first principle?" And this principle is for Clark the axiom of propositional relation in Scripture. In short, the Bible is God's thoughts expressed verbally, and God thinks logically and consistently, for logic is a characteristic of God's thinking. Hence, the system that is ultimately consistent is ultimately true. But since only an omniscient mind can know this system is ultimately consistent, finite minds must choose the one that seems most coherent. Such, for Clark, is the system of biblical Christianity.[36]

Some Basic Tenets of Rationalism

Our concern here is not with a complete list and critique of rationalistic premises but simply with an evaluation of essential rationalistic methodology as it bears on establishing the truth or falsity of theism. In line with this purpose we may single out several central tenets of rationalistic epistemology.

Reality Is Rationally (i.e., Mathematically) Analyzable

One of the central assumptions of modern rationalism, as of its Pythagorean and Platonic predecessors, is the belief in the union or communion of the mathematical and the metaphysical. That is to say, reality is analyzable by mathematical methods. The real is rational, and the heart of rationality is mathematical identity.

There Are Innate Ideas or Principles

Certain truths are innate to the mind and known independently of experience. The precise number and nature of these may vary from rationalist to rationalist, but all would agree that the basic laws of logic, such as the law of noncontradiction, are known innately. Humans are born with an a priori aspect of knowing that enables them to come to explicit knowledge of truth. Without innate ideas or principles there would be no knowledge at all and certainly no demonstrations or proofs. The mind is not a tabula rasa; sense experience is parallel to or the occasion of intellectual knowledge but is not the cause or basis of it. Truth is based in the ideas or principles innate to the mind and not in the changing flux of sense experience.

Truth Is Derived by Deduction from Self-Evident Principles

Another characteristic of modern rationalism is the use of geometric deductions based on intuitively known self-evident truths. The starting point is some apodictic axiom known innately by direct rational intuition. For Descartes, it is the intuition of self-evidently clear and distinct ideas. For Spinoza, it is insight into the perfect Idea of God and the axioms implied in that. Leibniz held to intuitive first principles such as sufficient reason and identity. From these axioms one can proceed by logical, mathematical deductions to necessary conclusions.

Rational Certainty Is Possible in Arguments for God

Common to modern rationalists is the claim of rational inescapability. God is known to exist not by scientific probability but by mathematical certainty. Spinoza did not blush to write "QED," indicating that the proof was completed and the demonstration made. Neither Descartes nor Spinoza was embarrassed to claim rational certainty for his argument. God exists, they insisted, as necessarily as 180 degrees flows from the nature of a triangle. Leibniz too considered his argument as certain as the laws of thought.

The Rationally Inescapable Is the Real

Beneath the foregoing tenet of rationalism is an all-important proposition usually implied by the proponents and often missed by the opponents of rationalism—namely, that the rationally inescapable is the real. That is, whatever is logically inescapable in the realm of thought about reality (e.g., that God exists) is necessarily true. The ontological argument is the classic case in point. In each case the hidden premise is that whatever is logically necessary is actually so. If it is logically necessary to think of God as a necessary Existent, then it is actually true that he does necessarily exist.

Rationalists are sometimes unfairly criticized for holding that the rational is the real. But they do not hold this. They maintain, rather, that the rational is only the *possibly* real, but that the rationally inescapable is the *actually* real. Mermaids are possible realities, since there is no contradiction in the concept or thought of them. But God is an actual reality for a rationalist because it would be a contradiction to deny his existence.

An Evaluation of Rationalism

Rationalism has some obvious virtues. We will first attend to these.

Valuable Strains in Rationalistic Thought

1. One of the more basic contributions of rationalism is its stress on the undeniability of the basic laws of thought. Unless the law of noncontradiction holds, there is not even the most minimal possibility of meaning or any hope for establishing truth. As a negative test for truth at least, the principle of noncontradiction is absolutely essential. Without this law, truth cannot be distinguished from falsity; all is equally true and false, which is to say nothing can be true.

2. Overzealous empiricists sometimes overlook the second contribution—namely, that there must be an a priori component to knowledge. This need not consist of innate ideas, but there must be at least some natural inclinations of the mind toward truth or toward the first principles of knowledge. If

there were not, nothing could ever be known. But something is knowable; agnosticism is self-defeating (see chap. 1). Without some categories or at least capacities of the mind to know reality, the very possibility of truth would be nil. Even *if* all knowledge came *through* the senses, it could not be known as true *by* the senses. There may be nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses, *except the mind itself*. And the mind must possess some innate or natural abilities of its own to engage in the pursuit of truth. This a priori contribution of rationalism is essential to any realistic epistemology.

3. Rationalism has contributed an emphasis on the intelligibility and knowability of reality. Agnosticism is self-destructive; reality is not paradoxical and unknowable. There is a correspondence or adequation between the mind and being. The real is rational, even though the rational is not always real. There is no way of denying that thought relates to reality without, in that very thought, applying thought to reality. The rationalists rightly preserve the truth that reality is intelligible.

4. Rationalism insists that what is contradictory is false. In other words, the law of noncontradiction is the test for the falsity of a view. That is, any position that is contradictory is false.

The Inadequacy of Rationalistic Methodology

Despite the significant and abiding contributions of some of its emphases, rationalism as a methodology for establishing truths about reality or the truths of theism is inadequate for several reasons.

1. Rationalism is based on an invalid move from thought to reality, from the possible to the actual. Just because something is thinkable does not make it actual. The thinkable describes only the realm of the possible and not necessarily that of the actual. What is not contradictory could possibly be true; what is contradictory could not possibly be true. That is, there could be centaurs (possible beings); there are humans (possible and actual beings); but there cannot be square circles (impossible beings). One may not legitimately move from the possible to the actual, from thought to reality.

At this point rationalists might agree but insist that they are not moving merely from the logically possible to the actually real but from the logically necessary to the ontologically inescapable. If they so insist, two observations are pertinent. First, it is not logically necessary for a human to exist. It is always at least logically possible for any contingent being that exists also not to exist. One's own existence may be actually *undeniable*, but this is something quite different from saying it is logically *necessary*. Logic does not determine existence; rather, it is reality that governs the nature of thought. Second, if the rationalist insists that at least in one case (i.e., the argument for God) there is rational necessity that leads us to reality, then we must point out the fallacy in the hidden premise in the ontological argument—namely, the contention that the rationally inescapable is the real. This leads to the next point.

2. Contrary to the central claim of traditional rationalism, the rationally inescapable is not the real. First of all, this claim *assumes* but does not prove—certainly not with rational inescapability—that something is real.[37] There is no purely logical justification for that claim. The arguments offered by rationalists reduce not to logical necessity but to actual undeniability. For example, one who attempts to deny that anything exists thereby affirms his or her own existence. But this does not at all imply that the person exists with logical necessity. One's own nonexistence is logically possible, and the affirmation of one's existence is actually unavoidable. But in no case is it logically necessary that one exist. Hence, the rationalist confuses actual undeniability with rational inescapability. There is no

purely logically compelling reason for reality. No strictly rational proof is available for the existence of anything. It is a mistaken effort to contend that reality can be rationally proved.

The invalidity of the ontological argument illustrates this point. Certainly, a triangle must be conceived as having three sides, and *if* a triangle exists, it must exist with three sides. But it is not logically necessary that any triangle exist anywhere. In like manner, it is logically necessary to predicate existence of a necessary Existent, and *if* such a Being exists, it must necessarily exist. But it is not logically necessary for a necessary Being to exist any more than it is for a triangle to exist. Of course, *if* something exists, then the ontological argument takes on new strength; if something exists, it is possible that something necessarily exists. But the point here is that there is no purely logical way to eliminate the "if." I know undeniably but not with logical necessity that I exist. And this is precisely the point at which the proponents of the ontological argument covertly borrow the fact of an undeniable existence in order to strengthen their argument. They know that it is undeniable that something exists (i.e., one's self). And once it is thereby granted that something is real, they can move more easily toward proving that it is logically necessary that something exist. But even here their argument is misdirected. For God cannot be a *logically* necessary Being. If there is a God, God would be an *actually* necessary Being, but it is confusing categories to make conceptual or rational necessity constitutive of the reality of God. Further, the ontological argument as such does not even prove that anything exists necessarily but only undeniably that something exists. It remains to be shown that this something is a necessary Being. And the ontological argument provides no rationally inescapable way of demonstrating that that which is exists undeniably or entails a necessary Being.

One attempt to fill in the gap in logical necessity left by the ontological argument might be an appeal to a premise from the cosmological argument by arguing that there must be a sufficient reason for whatever exists (à la Leibniz). This would lead us ultimately to a necessary ground for whatever contingent beings exist. But even here there is a fatal flaw in the rationalist's argument. The principle of sufficient reason cannot be proved with logical necessity; it is possible to deny the principle of sufficient reason without involving a contradiction. For example, one can affirm that *some* things do not have a sufficient reason, and the world is one of them. Now whereas it would be contradictory to affirm that *nothing* has a sufficient reason, including this very statement, nevertheless it is not contradictory to affirm that *something*(s) does not have sufficient reason. In point of fact, many theists (e.g., Aquinas) claim precisely this about God: he has no sufficient reason or cause but is an *un*caused cause. In any event, there is no purely rational contradiction in denying the principle of sufficient reason in regard to one's self or the world. And if it is logically possible that some things do not need a sufficient reason, then it is not logically necessary that God exist. Hence, even Leibniz's cosmological proof imports a premise that lacks rational inescapability. Rationalism thus fails in its attempt at rationally apodictic certainty. It is logically possible that there is no God.

3. Growing out of the previous criticism is one final criticism applicable to some forms of rationalism: they fail to demonstrate that all their first principles are rationally necessary. Spinoza "logically" deduced pantheism from his axioms, while Descartes and Leibniz "logically" deduced differing theisms from theirs. But opposing views cannot both be true. Not all rationalists begin with the exact same set of axioms. How, then, can one adjudicate between the conflicting axioms?

4. Even the weaker form of Christian rationalism represented by Gordon Clark is insufficient as a test for truth. As Clark admits, one would have to be omniscient in order to apply with certainty the logical consistency test for truth. Some systems seem equally consistent with their own presuppositions, and there is no way on purely rationalistic grounds to challenge those presuppositions. Clark, then, must choose between fideism and some other form of confirmation.

Logic alone is at best a negative test for truth. That is, it is a test for falsity by way of internal inconsistency. Spinoza's pantheism is as consistent with his axioms as Descartes's theism is with his axioms. But since many opposing views may be internally noncontradictory and consistent with their own presuppositions, logic alone is an insufficient test for truth.

5. Finally, pure logic as such is uninformative about reality. We must begin with some truth about reality (such as "I exist" or "the world exists") before we can draw other logical inferences from it. Logic without experience of reality is contentless, and pure experience without logic or reason is formless. Both are needed to build an understanding of the world.

Summary and Conclusion

The heart of rationalism is the thesis that the rationally inescapable is the real. Rationalistic theism holds that the existence of God can be demonstrated with logical necessity. We have seen that this is wrong for at least three reasons. First, logic is only a negative test for truth. It can eliminate what is false but cannot in and of itself establish what must be true. Logic can demonstrate what is only possibly real, not what is actually real. Second, there are no rationally inescapable arguments for the existence of God because it is always logically possible that nothing ever existed, including God. Of course, it is actually undeniable that something exists (e.g., my own existence is undeniable). But even here there is no logical necessity that I exist. My nonexistence is logically possible, as is that of the whole world and God. And if there is no logically necessary basis for either my existence or that of anything else, then it is not logically necessary to conceive the existence of anything, including God. Finally, there is no rationally inescapable way of establishing the first principles of reasoning. They are intuitive but nondemonstrated givens. Rationalism is without a necessary rational basis of its own. Hence, the existence of God cannot be demonstrated with logical necessity. If Christian theism is to be established as true, then some other test of truth must be found.

Select Readings for Chapter 2

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3
Fideism

Since empiricism led to skepticism in Hume (see chap. 1), which is self-defeating, and rationalism is inadequate as the sole test of a worldview, fideism may appear to be a more viable epistemological option. Perhaps there is indeed no rational or evidential way to establish Christian theism. Does truth in religion, then, rest solely on faith and not on a reasoning process? Fideists say yes. In this way, philosophical skepticism or agnosticism and religious fideism are comfortably compatible positions.

An Exposition of Some Major Fideistic Views

The stress on the operation of faith in the truth of a religious system has been with Christianity since the earliest times. Tertullian is often given as an example.

The Alleged Fideism of Tertullian (d. AD 230)

Several passages are often quoted to support the charge of fideism in Tertullian. He wrote: "With our faith, we desire no further belief." He also asked: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?"[38] He even called philosophers "those patriarchs of all heresy."[39] In his most famous passage, Tertullian went so far as to declare of the crucifixion of Christ that "it is by all means to be believed, because it is absurd." He added, "And He [Christ] was buried, and rose again, the fact is certain, because it is impossible."[40]

However, Tertullian was neither an irrationalist nor a fideist. Contrary to popular opinion, Tertullian never said, "Credo ad absurdum." He did not use the Latin word *absurdum* here, referring to a rational contradiction. Rather, he used *ineptum*, meaning "foolish," in this quote. Like the apostle Paul (in 1 Cor. 1:18), he was simply noting that the gospel seems "foolish" to unbelievers, but he never affirmed that it was logically contradictory in itself. Likewise, the incarnation is "impossible" only in a human way, but not divinely or actually impossible.

Tertullian's Stress on Reason. As an apologist of the Christian faith, Tertullian knew the value of human reason in the declaration and defense of the faith. He spoke of the rationality of all goodness. He said, "Nothing can be claimed as rational without order, much less can reason itself dispense with order in any one."[41] Even when speaking of the mystery of human free choice, Tertullian declared that Christianity "cannot even in this be ruled to be irrational."[42] He also spoke of applying "the rule of reason" as the guiding principle in the interpretation of Scripture.[43]

Tertullian also declared that "all the properties of God ought to be as rational as they are natural," for "nothing else can properly be accounted good than that which is rationally good; much less can goodness itself be defected in any irrationality."[44] He even opposed the baptism into the Christian faith of one who was "content with having simply believed, without full examination of the grounds or the tradition."[45]

Tertullian even spoke favorably of philosophers, admitting, "Of course we shall not deny that philosophers have sometimes thought the same things as ourselves." This is because of God's revelation in "nature"—that is, "by the common intelligence wherewith God has been pleased to endow the soul of man."[46] His highest praise for human reason was reserved for the testimony of God in the human soul. "These testimonies of the soul are as simple as true, commonplace as simple, universal as commonplace, natural as universal, divine as natural. . . . And if you have faith in God and Nature, have faith in the soul; thus you will believe yourself."[47] This is not to say that Tertullian rejected general revelation in the external world. In fact, he said, "We are worshippers of one God, of whose existence and character Nature teaches all men."[48]

An Evaluation. Despite his strong emphasis on faith, Tertullian, like other early fathers (cf. Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria), believed there was an important role for human reason in defense of the truth of the Christian religion. He believed in general revelation in both the external and internal world of the soul, though he stressed the latter. So he is not a good example of fideism, which he is often claimed to be.

The Alleged Fideism of Blaise Pascal (1623–62)

Pascal's famous statement is, "The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of" (No. 277).[49] This is often held out as evidence of his fideism. However, Pascal's alleged fideism turns out to be more of a reaction to Descartes's rationalism. He lived in a France drunk with the wine of Cartesian rationalism and increasingly drifting to deism. Pascal sensed an accelerated tendency to reject God's revelation in favor of human reason. In view of this, his alleged fideism was intended as an existential shock treatment to his complacent contemporaries.

The Critique of Rationalism. Pascal desired to destroy faith in reason so that he could restore "faith in faith." Reason to him is the geometric or mathematical mind, the mind of science. However, the first principles of science cannot be demonstrated. Further, the biblical doctrine of original sin informs us that man is sinful and God is hidden (No. 445). Hence, human corruption stands in the way of Descartes's theistic proofs. Furthermore, reason is really dependent on the heart for its very basis and function. The heart is the intuitive center of man, viewing all things synoptically as opposed to partially. By contrast with reason, it is both more sensitive and more comprehensive. Even knowledge of first principles is intuitive, "and reason must trust these intuitions of the heart, and must base on them every argument" (No. 282). Pascal's conclusion to the analysis of man's reason is skepticism and humility. Man is a "thinking reed" incapable of both total ignorance and absolute knowledge. "Know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, weak reason; be silent, foolish nature. . . . Hear God" (No. 434).

The Way to Truth through Faith. As his famous statement that "the heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of" (No. 277) would indicate, the heart is the absolute bedrock of all knowledge. It knows intuitively and holistically, not discursively or abstractly. Hence, "it is the heart which experiences God, and not the reason" (No. 278). Reason must submit to the heart, for "submission is the use of reason in which consists true Christianity" (No. 269). It is not that Christianity is opposed to reason per se. "On the contrary, the mind must be open to proofs, must be confirmed by custom, and offer itself in humbleness to *inspiration, which alone can produce a true and saving effect*" (No. 245; emphasis added).

Reason alone will never find God, for "it is the heart which experiences God and not the reason. This then, is faith: God felt by the heart, not by the reason," and this "faith is a gift of God; do not

believe that we said it was a gift of reasoning" (Nos. 278, 279). It is therefore futile for humans to attempt to reason their way to God. Faith, for Pascal, is generated by humility, submission, and inspiration. Humans must submit to the authority of God revealed in the Scriptures and the fathers. God must take the initiative, for "those to whom God has imparted religion by intuition are very fortunate, and justly convinced. But to those who do not have it, we can give it only by reasoning, waiting for God to give them insight, without which faith it is only human, and useless for salvation" (No. 282).

For Pascal, "faith is different from proof; the one is human, the other is the gift of God. It is this faith that God himself puts into the human heart, of which the proof is often the instrument; but this faith is in the heart, and makes us not say *scio* [I know], but *credo* [I believe]" (No. 248). A proof at best may be the instrument by which God places faith in one's heart. But what are these proofs? What are the tests for the truth of Christianity? A true religion is one that cures human pride and sin. In this regard, Christ alone is the proof of Christianity, "for in Jesus Christ, we prove God, and teach morality and doctrine" (No. 547). And "it is not only impossible but useless to know God without Jesus Christ" (No. 549). Pascal does appeal to the miraculous history of Christianity, prophecy, the high morality of Christianity, and its perpetuity and spread as evidence of its truthfulness (No. 482). However, none of these is absolutely convincing proof, because "there is enough light for those who only desire to see, and enough obscurity for those who have a contrary disposition" (No. 144). The decision to accept or reject must be made by faith.

The Great Wager. Pascal's famous wager is perhaps the best example of his test for truth in operation.[50] He begins by asking, "Who then will condemn Christians for being unable to give rational grounds for their belief, professing as they do a religion for which they cannot give rational grounds?" For "if they did prove it, they would not be keeping their word. It is by being without proof that they show they are not without sense." Pascal then proceeds to pose the alternatives: "Either God is or he is not. But to which view shall we be inclined? Reason cannot decide this question. Infinite chaos separates. . . . Reason cannot make you choose either, reason cannot prove either wrong. Nonetheless, one must choose. Which will you choose then?" Then he proposes: "Let us weigh up the gain and the loss involved in calling heads that God exists. Let us assess the two cases; if you win you win everything, if you lose you lose nothing. Do not hesitate then; wager that he does exist." There is eternal life and happiness to gain if God exists and nothing at all to lose if there is no God. "So," Pascal asks, "what have you to lose?" Wager on God.

From the standpoint of reason, faith in God is a bet in which the purely rational odds are about even (No. 144), but in which the existential dice are highly loaded in favor of faith. There are no purely rational tests for religious truth. Even "contradiction is a poor indication of truth. Many things that are certain are contradicted. Many that are false pass without contradiction." Hence, "contradiction is no more an indication of falsehood than lack of it is an indication of truth" (No. 177 [384]).[51] Truth is tested in the heart, not the mind, and the criteria are existential rather than rational.

An Evaluation. On closer examination, Pascal turns out to be more of an antirationalist than a fideist. He is a moderate evidentialist who believes that reason and evidence are helpful but that, nonetheless, reason alone will never find God. It is the heart, and not reason, that experiences God.

Fideism in Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55)

Few pens have pierced the rationalist's conscience as that of Kierkegaard. As Pascal disquieted the Cartesian rationalism, Kierkegaard declared war on Hegelian idealism. Hegel was interested in

true *propositions* known logically (i.e., dialectically), but Kierkegaard was concerned with truth in persons, who are known only paradoxically. Reality is not found in the objective world of universal reason but in the subjective realm of individual choice.

Life's Three Stages. One of the easiest ways to capture the spirit of Kierkegaard's thought is in his elaboration of the three stages of life: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. Each stage is separated by despair and is spanned by a leap of faith. When one passes to a higher level, the lower level is dethroned but not destroyed. The contrast between the aesthetic life and the ethical life is the difference between feeling and deciding; it is a move from a self-centered to a law-centered life.[52] In the ethical stage, one comes from a life without choosing to the point of choosing life, from being a spectator to being a participator, from deliberation to decision. One's life is no longer a life of the intellect but one of the will. Nor is it a life determined by immediate interests but one controlled by ultimate concern; that is, the person's center of interest has shifted from the present moment to lifetime duty.

The ethical life is a decided advance over the aesthetic, but it is by no means final.[53] The religious transcends the ethical as God transcends his law. In the ethical stage, one chooses life, but in the religious, one chooses God. The ethical concentrates only on a lifetime duty, whereas the religious focuses on eternity. The ethical person has utmost respect for the moral law, but the religious person gives an ultimate response to the Moral Law Giver. In moving to the religious center of gravity, one leaves the realm of the objective and propositional for the subjective and personal and moves from the essential to the existential.

The manner in which the religious transcends the ethical is beautifully dramatized by Kierkegaard in his use of the story of Abraham.[54] The moral law said, "Thou shalt not kill," but God said to Abraham, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, . . . and offer him . . . upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Gen. 22:2 RSV). In this teleological suspension of the ethical, Abraham's faith transcended his reason; his existential decision superseded his ethical obligation. Herein is the paradox—namely, that "the individual is higher than the universal." "Faith is precisely this paradox, that the individual as the particular is higher than the universal, is justified over against it, is not subordinate but superior." So this "is and remains to all eternity a paradox inaccessible to thought." By this act of religious faith, Abraham "overstepped the ethical entirely and possessed a higher *telos* [end] outside of it, in relation to which he suspended the former."[55]

The Nature of Religious Truth. Like the ethical, the rational is not discarded by Kierkegaard, but it is disenfranchised. Religion does not relinquish reason entirely, but it relegates it to a lower level. Objective scientific and philosophical truth has its place, but by it a person can never reach God. This point is strongly emphasized in Kierkegaard's later distinction between Religion A and Religion B.[56] The former is natural religion, but the latter is supernatural. The first is religiosity, but the second is Christianity. A person with Religion A is still operating in the realm of the rational, whereas Religion B is paradoxical. The former involves an immanent concept of God, but the latter believes in a transcendent or "totally other" God. Religion A originates in man's general need for God, but Religion B rests on the believer's specific need for Christ.

Religious or existential truth in the highest sense, then, can be characterized as follows: it is *personal* and not impersonal; it is not something one has but what one *is*; it is not what one knows, but what one *lives*. Objective truth is something we grip, but religious truth is something that *grips us*. It is *appropriated* and not merely acknowledged. It is discovered by *commitment* and not by any alleged correspondence to the world. In a word, truth is *subjectivity*. Kierkegaard wrote, "It is subjectivity that Christianity is concerned with, and it is only in subjectivity that its truth exists, if it

exists at all; objectively Christianity has absolutely no existence."[57] This point is clearly illustrated in Kierkegaard's conception of the relation of Christianity with history. If the first century contemporaries of Christ "had left nothing behind them but these words: 'We have believed that in such and such a year the God appeared among us in the humble figure of a servant, that he lived and taught in our community, and finally died,' it would be more than enough."[58] In brief, one cannot derive the eternal from the historical or the spiritual from the rational.

The Nature of Faith and Its Relation to Reason. For Kierkegaard, faith is humanity's highest passion. Faith is not assent to objective propositions; rather, it is a subjective submission to a person, to God through Christ. It is a solitary act of an individual confronted with God. By faith, a person's spirit is actualized. Faith is prompted by paradox and is directed toward a person. It is an act of the will exercised without the aid of reason or objective guides. Reason plays only a negative and dialectical role in relation to faith; it enables us to understand that Christian truth is paradoxical. Humanity's basic problem is not ignorance of God's revelation, but offense at its intrusion into human life. Original sin hinders man's ability to know truth. A person cannot know the truth without being in the truth, and cannot be in the truth without God placing him or her in it. The difference between human reason and God's revelation is illustrated by Kierkegaard in the contrast between Socrates and Christ.[59]

Socratic wisdom brought forth truth from within by a backward recollection, whereas God's revelation brings truth from without by a forward expectation. Human truth is immanent and comes from the wise human being, but God's truth is transcendent and is mediated through the God-Human. The truths of human reason are rational, but those of divine revelation are paradoxical. God's truth is neither analytic nor synthetic but antithetic; hence, it can be accepted only by a leap of faith.

God is the center of the meaningful but real paradox of our faith. God is the Unknown Limit to knowing, which magnetically draws reason but which causes a passionate collision with man. Human reason can neither penetrate nor avoid God. The supreme paradox of all is the attempt to discover something thought cannot think. God is unknown in himself and even unknown in Christ; his presence is indicated only by signs or pointers. The paradoxical revelation of the Unknown is not knowable by reason. Humanity's response must be by a leap of faith that is given (though not forced on us) by God. Faith in God is neither rationally nor empirically grounded, so the existence of God is neither rationally certain nor empirically evident. The empirical evidence for Christ tells us only that an unusual, humble man lived and died, and rationally man cannot even comprehend God, let alone prove him. We cannot imagine what God is like or what he is unlike. The most we can do is to project familiar qualities in the direction of the Transcendent that always fall short of him.

The existence of God cannot be proved from nature, for nature assumes God for believers. The very attempt to prove God is folly, "for if God does not exist, it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if he does exist it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I will have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain . . . since otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if he did not exist."[60] What is more, even if we could prove God's *being* (in himself), it would be irrelevant to us; it is God's *existence* or relatedness to us that alone has religious significance. God is presented to humanity for an existential choice, not for rational reflections. "For to prove the existence of one who is present is the most shameless affront, since it is an attempt to make him ridiculous. . . . The existence of a king, or his presence, is commonly acknowledged by an appropriate expression of subjection and submission."[61] Thus it is that one proves God's existence by worship, not by proofs.

However, despite his unadvised misuse of the word "paradox," Kierkegaard is not claiming that there is an ultimate irrationality in God, but rather that there is a suprarationality that upholds finite rationality, or holds it in place, by transcending it. The real absurdity is in humanity's situation: people must act in response to God as though they were certain without any reason for doing so, and God is an absolute paradox to humanity not simply because of the inability of the human mind, but because of the depravity of the human heart. Humanity's task is not to comprehend God intellectually, but to submit to God existentially. The paradox is not centered in the theoretical but in the volitional; it is not so much metaphysical as axiological. In short, God is both a folly to our finite minds and an offense to our sinful will.

The Test for Truth. As can readily be seen, there are no objective—that is, historical or rational—tests for religious truth. Truth is *subjective* and personal, and the acid test is one's submission to and abiding in truth. The surest test of the truth of Christianity is *suffering*. Suffering is the infinite dissatisfaction one realizes in approaching nearer and nearer to God. Another earmark of living in the truth is *solitude*. Faith is essentially a private relation to God; loneliness is the clear mark of that solitude. Finally, truth is realized in the *suprahistorical*—that is, when one becomes contemporary with the eternal Christ. Christ is not a past individual but a person present in the now of Christian experience.

An Evaluation. Although Kierkegaard is interpreted by some as a mild evidentialist, he definitely embraces some central fideistic claims (see below). Nonetheless, he is not, as some mistakenly conclude, an irrationalist. He is more of an antirationalist. God cannot be known intellectually by reason but only existentially by faith. Truth is not testable objectively by logical criteria but only subjectively by a personal commitment. Faith, not reason, is the door to truth.

The Fideism of Karl Barth (1886–1968)

The Early Barth. Karl Barth dropped a bombshell on the theological world with the publication of his *Commentary on Romans* (1919).[62] In the first edition, he took a highly Kierkegaardian view of God and revelation. God is "wholly other," and revelation strikes the world with judgment from God, not knowledge of him. Nothing in the world can be identified with God's revelation, not the flesh of Christ or the Bible. The Bible is only the crater left by the meteorite of God's Word. Even Christ in his humanity stands fallen and under the condemnation of God. Revelation reveals man's lostness, but it tells us nothing positive about God.

Barth's Shift from Radical Existentialism. In 1920, Barth republished his *Commentary on Romans*, shifting from an extreme Kierkegaardian emphasis to a more moderate position under the influence of Heinrich Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics* (1861). However, by 1931, in his work on Anselm,[63] Barth affirmed that God can be known only by revelation. The ontological argument makes no sense as a rational proof, he argued, but it is an affirmation of faith: "I believe in order to understand," as Anselm put it. Once one knows God by revelation, the ontological argument takes on meaning. We do understand God only analogously, by faith, not by any ontological similarity between creature and Creator.

The Later Barth. Barth began his *Church Dogmatics*[64] in 1927 but restated them in a nonexistentialist way a few years later. There is knowledge of God for humanity because God's revelation in Christ (the Word of God) is the action of the triune God. The Father is revealed through the Son (the objective reality) and through the Holy Spirit (subjective reality). And the Bible is the record or witness to this revelation.

The Word of God takes several forms for Barth. Christ is the primary and personal form; God is revealed in and through the person of Christ. The Bible is the secondary form of God's revelation in that it is a verbal witness to Christ. The Bible is God's Word in the sense that God speaks through it. It is a sacrament that gives us indirect access to God. However, we do not know the Bible is God's Word by any objective evidence. It is a self-attesting truth. We can no more stand outside God's revelation than we can get outside our own experience. We must put the Bible to the test and allow it to speak to us.[65]

On the one hand, our knowledge of God is not univocal; this kind of knowledge is possible in mathematics and chemistry but not in theology. On the other hand, neither is our knowledge of God through the Word of God purely equivocal, since we do know God indirectly through his self-revelation. The only remaining alternative is an analogous knowledge of God.[66] This analogy is not, of course, the Thomistic analogy of being, which Barth rejects because it makes God in humanity's image, thereby attaining God through human efforts. Rather, it is an analogy of faith, which is mediated through the Bible and given by God's grace.

Barth's "No" to Natural Theology. Despite Barth's repudiation and modification of his earlier and more extreme Kierkegaardian existentialism, he remained strongly fideistic in his apologetic. There is a general or natural revelation, but nothing can be built upon it.[67] Barth reserves some of his strongest words for an attack on natural theology. To him, "Natural theology does not even exist as an entity capable . . . of being rejected. If one occupies himself with real theology one can pass by so-called natural theology only as one would pass by an abyss into which he is to step if one does not want to fall."[68]

Barth's attitude toward natural theology is summarized in the one-word title of his book to Emil Brunner, *Nein* (*No*). Not only is natural theology impossible, there is not even in humanity an active capacity to receive God's revelation. To attribute to humanity the ability to receive God's revelation is to deny sovereign grace and is inconsistent with the effects of sin on the human mind. Humanity has a responsibility before God's revelation but certainly no natural capacity for receiving it. Further, to assert, as Brunner does, a "general grace" is not to take seriously the Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura* and to ally oneself with the Roman Catholics.[69]

Even Brunner's distinction between the material image of God in humanity (which is completely fallen) and the formal image or capacity to know God, which remains intact, is rejected by Barth. The image of God in humanity is destroyed by sin. There is not even a *reparatio*, or capacity for repair. Barth continues: "The concept of a 'capacity' of man for God has therefore to be dropped. If, nevertheless, there is an encounter and communion between God and man, then God himself must have created for it conditions which are not the least supplied (not even 'somehow' not even 'to some extent!') by the existence of the formal factor."[70] It is the Holy Spirit who miraculously creates the "contact point" with humanity.

Barth sets forth his view most positively in his response to Brunner's contention that Calvin admitted the validity of a general or natural revelation. First, Barth contends that Calvin did not accept any second or "double" knowledge of God for fallen humanity besides or in addition to the Scriptures. Second, Calvin admitted only the possibility in principle—not in fact—of a knowledge of God via creation. That is, there is a subjective or hypothetical possibility but not an objective or actual possibility of knowing God by natural reason. Third, humanity's "capacity" is for idolatry but not for knowledge of the true Deity. Rather than a "contact" point, this capacity is a "repulsion" of God. Fourth, Calvin always used the principle of possible knowledge of God only to demonstrate humanity's responsibility. "The fact that God is revealed in all his works is God's scriptural

testimony to us against the ignorance of man. . . . It points out that man's inability to know him is his guilt."[71] Finally, for Calvin, true knowledge of God in Christ includes a real knowledge of the true God in creation, but it does not, Barth says, bring forth a second, relatively independent knowledge of God through nature.

The Revelation Fideism of Cornelius Van Til (1895–1987)

Fideism is not limited to nonevangelicals. Cornelius Van Til speaks from a strong Reformed, biblical perspective theologically and yet in an absolute revelational presuppositionalism apologetically. Although some of his followers view Van Til's apologetics as a transcendental argument,[72] this position also has a strong fideistic element in it.

The Absolute Presuppositional Starting Point. Van Til admits, "I start more frankly from the Bible as the source from which as an absolute authoritative revelation I take my whole interpretation of life." Furthermore, he writes, "I take what the Bible says about God and his relation to the universe as unquestionably true on its own authority." If this should appear to beg the whole question, we must remember that Van Til confessed that "to admit one's own presuppositions and to point out the presuppositions of others is therefore to maintain that all reasoning is, in the nature of the case, *circular reasoning*," for "the starting point, the method, and the conclusions are always involved in one another."[73] Presuppositions cannot be avoided; non-Christians have them as well as Christians, but they are diametrically opposed. "But the Christian, as did Tertullian, must contest the very principles of his opponent's position. The only 'proof' of the Christian position is that unless its truth is presupposed there is no possibility of 'proving' anything at all."[74]

All Facts Are Theistic and Christian. Apart from the Christian worldview, nothing really makes sense, for "without the presupposition of the God of Christianity we cannot even interpret one fact correctly. Facts without God would be brute facts. They would have no intelligible relation to one another." Later he adds, "We maintain that there can be no facts but Christian-theistic facts. We . . . find again and again that if we seek to interpret any fact on a non-Christian hypothesis it turns out to be a brute fact, and brute facts are unintelligible." The reason for this is that no fact stands alone. "We maintain," Van Til writes, "that unless God has caused the existence of the universe, there would be no possibility of scientific thought. Facts would be utterly unrelated." Non-Christian scientists do, however, discover truths, because they "are never able and therefore never do employ their own methods consistently."[75] They cannot avoid God's truth entirely because they live in God's world.

There Is No Really Common Ground with Non-Christians. The only "common ground" with unbelievers is that they too are creatures in God's image and live in God's world. But there are no common notions or methods; non-Christians approach the world differently from Christians, and they view it differently.[76] We have a common world with unbelievers but no common worldview. The contact point with unbelievers is the *imago Dei*. But even here the "point of contact" is the "point of conflict," for "if there is no head-on collision with the systems of the natural man there will be no point of contact with the sense of deity in the natural man."[77] Conflict is inevitable because of human depravity and sin.

The Effects of Sin on Human Reason. Unbelievers not only *ought* to know there is a God; they also *do* know it. There are "no atheistic men because no man can deny the revelational activity of the true God within him."[78] However, even though unbelievers cannot deny God, they repress the knowledge of God. It is for this reason that no methods are really neutral. Depraved, sinful humans are always in autonomous control over the methods they use. Even the basic laws of logic cannot be

used apart from God's revelation to discover truth, for "neither can [we], as finite beings, by means of *logic* as such, say what reality *must* be or *cannot* be." In this case "man must be autonomous, 'logic' must be legislative as to the field of 'possibility' and possibility must be above God." This is why all traditional apologetics are doomed to failure, for to argue from facts to God is impossible, and "on any but the Christian theistic basis there is no possible connection of logic with the facts at all."[79] By the nature of the case, then, all theistic arguments for God's existence must fail.

The Role of Rational and Historical Evidence in Van Til's Apologetics. Does the inability of autonomous human reason to arrive at God by "facts" and "logic" mean that Van Til has no use for reason and evidence? No, they are useful, but not as they are used to prove the existence of God or the truth of Christianity. Apart from presupposing these truths, historical "facts (such as the resurrection) make absolutely no sense at all. Nevertheless," Van Til writes, "I would engage in historical apologetics. . . . But I would not talk endlessly about facts and more facts without ever challenging the non-believer's philosophy of fact. A really fruitful approach argues that every fact *is* and *must be* such as proves the truth of the Christian theistic position."[80] In short, once one presupposes the truth of Christian theism, then and then alone do history and historical facts (such as the resurrection) make sense.

Likewise, rational and theistic apologetics have a valid place within the framework of one's absolute presupposition of the ontological Trinity of the Bible. Indeed, Van Til believes that we must presuppose the absolute certainty of God's existence vis-à-vis the mere probable force theists give to their arguments, so there is in this sense an "absolute certain proof for the existence of God and the truth of Christian theism. Therefore," Van Til writes, "I do not reject 'the theistic proofs' but merely insist on formulating them in such a way as not to compromise the doctrines of Scripture."[81] Of course, therein is the fideistic hitch in his whole approach, it would appear that, in an admittedly circular reasoning process, the Bible is *assumed* to be true by an act of faith in its self-vindicating authority. If that is the case, the "proofs" of God and historical "facts" of Christianity have absolutely no meaning or validity outside the fideistic acceptance of the presupposition that Christianity is true.

Some of Van Til's followers view this absolute presupposition of the Triune God revealing himself in the sixty-six books of Holy Scripture as a transcendental argument. They say that in Van Til's view it is necessary to posit this belief as a condition for making sense out of the world, but even here there are some serious problems. First, if Van Til is using a transcendental argument to prove Christianity, then why isn't this reasoning process, like all other human reason, totally depraved and void of any effectiveness? Second, since unbelievers can and do use transcendental arguments, is not this a "common ground" with them, which Van Til vehemently rejects? Third, even granting that it is rationally necessary to posit a theistic God as grounds for making sense out of the world, this is a *leap of faith* to know (a) that this God must be triune and (b) that he is the revealer of the sixty-six inspired books of the Protestant Bible. Even if the Trinity is used to solve the metaphysical problem of the One and Many (which it does not, since the persons are not three beings in one Being), why three persons in God? Why not two or four persons or more that would be a plurality in unity? Surely Van Til gets this trinitarian belief *by faith* and not by a transcendental argument. Even if a special revelation like the Bible is transcendentally necessary to make sense out of the world (and it is not), nowhere does Van Til demonstrate that it is transcendentally necessary for such a book to have these exact sixty-six books in it. Would not a book without 3 John work as well? The truth is that this too is a *matter of faith* for Van Til, so in the final analysis there is a fundamental fideism core in the Van Tilian apologetic enterprise.

The Fideism of Alvin Plantinga (1932–)

One of the most noted Christian philosophers of the twentieth and twenty-first century is Alvin Plantinga. Like Van Til, Plantinga comes from a strong Calvinist background. As such, he stresses the sovereignty of God. Once asked by a Dallas TV anchor why Christian philosophy was on the rise, Plantinga retorted, "Because God willed it to be so."

Belief in God Is Properly Basic. Plantinga is best known for his view that belief in God is "properly basic." What he means by this is that there are certain beliefs for which it is foolish to require justification (e.g., "I exist" or "There is a past"). He places "God exists" in this same category. Echoing Kierkegaard, Plantinga argues that belief in God is so basic that it would be folly to ask for some foundation for this belief, so the belief itself is properly basic. No further account is called for.[82] Indeed, he rejects the validity of general revelation.[83]

Reformed Epistemology. "Reformed Epistemology" is the name given to this school of thought that belief in God is properly basic and, hence, does not need to be inferred from other truths in order to be reasonable. Reformed epistemologists believe this is based in the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformer John Calvin, who taught that God has placed in us a *sensus divinitatis* (sense of divinity), and, hence, we need no proof or reasons for God's existence. However, the late Kenneth Kantzer wrote a doctoral dissertation at Harvard, on the knowledge of God in John Calvin, that rebuts this idea and defends the view that Calvin not only held to the validity of general revelation (from which we can make inferences to God) but also spoke (in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1) of "proofs" for the existence of God, as did the Old Princetonians B. B. Warfield and Charles Hodge, and, more recently, John Gerstner and R. C. Sproul.[84] Since these men are also Reformed, it is a misnomer to call Plantinga's opposing view "Reformed Epistemology."

Why Plantinga Supports the Ontological Argument. Strangely, Plantinga is a supporter of a revised version of the ontological argument, insisting that modal logic demands that there be a necessary Being—namely, one that exists in every possible world.[85] However, when pressed at a philosophy conference at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (Deerfield, IL), Plantinga admitted a contingency; namely, one does not have to accept modal logic. His argument was really a hypothetical one; namely, *if* you accept modal logic, then a necessary Being must exist. Of course, one does not have to accept modal logic. Further, when Plantinga was asked whether "no world at all was a possible world," Plantinga answered "No." The argument for God from modal logic assumes that some world must exist in order to prove that something must necessarily exist—a circular argument. Thus Plantinga is not really offering a proof for God's existence. He simply *believes* in God's existence and is reasoning about this belief.

Response of Critics. First of all, while there may be beliefs that are properly basic, there must be some rational justification for putting them in this category, but having given this justification, one is no longer strictly a fideist.[86] For example, "I exist" cannot be denied without affirming it, so it is undeniably true. Second, other critics offered the "Great Pumpkin Objection," which argues that if belief in God can be properly basic, why cannot just any belief be properly basic? Could we not say the same for any bizarre aberration we can think of? What about voodoo or astrology? What about the belief that the Great Pumpkin returns every Halloween? Plantinga's response is inadequate since he does not justify his criteria for proper basicality over other criteria. Rather, he simply claims that the critics' criteria are wrong because they assume Classical Foundationalism (which holds to First Principles). However, the basic laws of logic embraced by traditional Foundationalists (like, e.g.,

Thomas Aquinas) are not arbitrary; they are undeniable, since they cannot be denied without employing them (see chap. 8).

Summary of Some Central Fideistic Premises

A number of tenets are common to fideism in general, but not to all fideists in particular, in relation to Christian apologetics. The emphasis varies from one writer to another, but some central contentions are very similar. Fideists characteristically claim or stress the following:

1. Faith alone is the way to God. There is little disagreement among fideists on this point; the only way to the truth about God, certainly saving truth, is through faith. God cannot be attained by human reason. Indeed, human reason often hinders, if not obscures, the knowledge of God.
2. Truth is not found in the purely rational or objective realm, if it is there at all. Certainly religious truth does not have an objective basis or character. Saving truth is subjective and personal, not objective or propositional. That is, it is subjectively and personally appropriated, not rationally attained.
3. Evidence and reason do not point definitely in the direction of God. On the contrary, one is left by reason in a state of equipollence or even paradox, and certainly there are no valid proofs for the existence of God.
4. The tests for truth are existential, not rational. Truth is tested personally in one's life by faith or submitting to God, and so forth, but not by human reason. Even such a time-honored principle as that of noncontradiction cannot be used as a positive test for religious truth. Some fideists would even reject noncontradiction as a negative test for truth, namely, as a guide to what is false.
5. God's revelation is the source of all truth. Truth comes from the top down. If humans could know God by natural reason, God's grace would be negated and human works would be established as a means of knowing God.

An Evaluation of Fideism

Like other positions, fideism is not devoid of significant contributions to our understanding of Christian truth and life. However, as a methodology for establishing the truth of a theistic or Christian worldview, fideism is completely inadequate. First, let us outline some of the positive features.

Some Positive Contributions of Fideism

The Antirationalistic Emphasis of Fideism Has Significant Value. Humanity can neither rationally comprehend nor demonstrate the existence of the transcendent God of Christian theism by purely logical arguments. God is beyond reason's futile attempt to grasp him completely and with logical necessity. This is especially true of the geometric and deductive rationalism of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz. The mathematical model is insufficient; God is more than the Great Mathematician. God's nature cannot be understood in purely mathematical terms, nor can his existence be demonstrated with mathematical certainty.

Neither Evidence nor Reason Is the Basis for One's Belief in God. A believer does not love God *because of* the objective evidence any more than a husband loves his wife on the grounds that he possesses objective evidence about her nature and existence. One's faith in God is based on who God

is and not on the alleged evidence about his nature and existence. The basis for belief in God must be God himself. To deny this is to replace God with evidence about God. It is to replace God as the object of one's faith with human reasoning about God. This leads to a related point.

Objective Evidence Alone Does Not Induce a Religious Response. Apologetics as such does not and cannot produce a faith in Christianity. Whatever preliminary, instrumental, or confirmatory role that Christian evidence may have, only the response of the believer to the work of the Holy Spirit can result in a personal appropriation of Christ. Rational arguments cannot produce faith in God, and historical evidence cannot bring about a commitment to Christ. Faith operates in the subjective and personal dimension that goes beyond purely rational processes. Objective evidence is at best only a tool through which God can operate, but faith is never the product of historical facts alone.

Faith Is More Than Intellectual; It Is Volitional. Fideism rightly stresses that faith in God is not mere intellectual assent; it is a heart commitment. Faith is more than rational; it is volitional. To believe in God involves a commitment of one's whole person and not merely an acknowledgment of the truth of certain statements *about* God. The mind can know something is objective without the will responding positively or the heart trusting in it.

Truth Is Known Only by Personal Appropriation. Religious truth is ultimately truth about a Person (God); it is truth that must be accepted by a person (the believer) in a personal way—namely, by a personal commitment. Whatever propositions about God one can utter and however accurately they may depict God, there are no substitutes for God himself. In the final analysis religious truth is about a Person. The subject and object of religious statements are personal; religious truth is deeply personal in nature. In short, fideism is a welcomed corrective to the abstract and deadening influences of rationalism and formalism.

All Facts Are "Interpra-Facts" That Make Sense Only within an Overall Belief System. Van Til was right in stressing that no scientific or historical "facts" make any sense outside of a metaphysical framework. Some non-Christians have also stressed this point.[87] Without an overall context and relationship there is no structure for meaning and truth. Even the resurrection of Christ makes no sense in a naturalistic worldview; it is simply an unusual event at best in anything but a theistic universe. Unless there is a God, miracles are not even possible. Hence, one can never use a miracle as such to prove God's existence, since the very fact of a miracle (as an act of God) presupposes that God already exists. How can one know there is an act of God unless there is already presupposed a God who can act? The same events and "facts" do have different meanings within different worldviews. Van Til is correct: there is no Christian truth unless this is a theistic world.

Humanity's Sinful Condition Affects the Human Response to God. Many Christian fideists make this point, noting that persons ought to love and serve the true God but they do not, and their choice does indeed influence their whole way of thinking about reality. In actual practice, the non-Christian operates on different presuppositions and comes to different conclusions. Nonbelievers' basic "faith" or beliefs are different since they refuse to obey God. They cannot avoid having presuppositions about the world; there must be something to think *with* in order for one to think *about* the world. Some framework is necessary if one is to have thoughts about reality, even for those who allegedly refuse to think about it. In short, worldviews are unavoidable, and different worldviews are based on differing presuppositions. And a person's sinfulness does indeed influence the worldview he or she formulates.

A Critique of the Fideistic Test for Truth

In spite of the many important insights fideists offer into the nature and acceptance of religious truth, their method and test for truth are decidedly inadequate, for several reasons.

Some Fideists Confuse Epistemology and Ontology. That is, they fail to distinguish the order of *knowing* and the order of *being*. The Christian fideist may very well be right about the *fact* that there is a God, but this begs the question unless the fideist can tell *how* he or she knows this is the case. God may indeed have revealed himself to us through the Bible, but how do we know that the Bible is the Word of God? Other books with contrary teachings also claim to be the Word of God (e.g., the Qur'an). Assuming the truth of Christianity, Christian fideists are right in *what* they believe about God but wrong in the *reason* for that belief. Certainly if there is a God and all truth comes from God, it follows that even the very criteria of distinguishing truth from error will be God-given, but God is what is to be proved, and we cannot begin by assuming his existence as a fact. If we do not have any tests for truth with which we can begin, we can never make truth claims, nor can we even know something is true. We can simply believe without justification what we want to believe, but in this case so can any idiotic, insane, or contrary view be simply believed. Also, how is one to say who, if anyone, has the truth? Without an epistemological way of knowing the truth, no ontological truth claims can be pressed.

Fideism Fails to Clearly Distinguish Belief in God and Belief That There Is a God. The fideist shares some important insights on belief *in* God. On the one hand, such a belief must be personal and existential and not purely abstract and intellectual. On the other hand, is it possible to have an intelligible or credible belief *in* God unless one has some way first to believe *that* there is a God? Can a man, for example, place his trust *in* his wife unless he first has some warrant for believing *that* she is his wife? Would it not be the greatest folly at day's end to rush into the arms of one's wife at the front door, if it is the wrong door and someone else's wife? A man must have some evidence *that* he is taking the right path and embracing the true object of his love before he makes the existential *commitment to* someone. Likewise, before one makes a leap of faith *in* God, one must have some reason to believe *that* it is the true God to which one is committed. Another overlooked distinction follows from this.

Fideists Do Not Differentiate Belief in God and the Support or Warrant for That Belief. This distinction has been clearly drawn by some major theists. Aquinas, for example, held that faith rests solely on the testimony and authority of God. Evidence may be used to support, confirm, or even accompany this belief, but it must never be the basis for believing.[88] The fideists properly stress the basis for belief—namely, God or God's revelation—but they seem to neglect entirely the warrant or support for exercising this belief. In short, evidence bears directly on *belief that* there is a God but not directly on *belief in* God. "Belief that" is an intellectual matter, and there are rational arguments for it, but "belief in" is an existential concern that has no such objective tests for truth. Fideism is right on the latter but almost completely overlooks the need for criteria or a test for the truth that there is a God, or that the Bible is the Word of God, and so on.

Fideism Often Neglects the Need for the Propositional in Its Zeal to Stress the Personal. There is no reason, in contrast to Kierkegaard and Barth, that God's revelation cannot be *both* personal and propositional. The Bible claims to be a propositional revelation—that is, a revelation in words.[89] Indeed, it is difficult to understand any meaningful sense of the words *know* and *understand* as applied to the person of God unless they have some cognitive content that is expressible in words or propositions. Surely the object of religious faith is a Person (God), but there is no way to rule out of hand that propositions can be uttered about that Person.[90] Revelations do not have to be impersonal just because they are written, as anyone can testify who has carried on a romance by mail! Indeed, the

complete fideistic attempt to deny that God is verbally expressible entails necessarily some verbal expressions about God. Fideism, therefore—like agnosticism and rationalism before it—is self-defeating.

Fideists Fail to See the Difference between the Unavoidable and the Unjustifiable. We may grant that presuppositions are unavoidable; people cannot think without epistemological and even ontological assumptions. However, the crucial question is not whether we can *avoid* using presuppositions, but whether we can *justify* those we use. All kinds of differing presuppositions are available. We may presuppose that this is a naturalistic world, or a pantheistic one, or a theistic one, and so on. But which presupposition should be chosen, and with what warrant?

In one sense, all humans are fideists—that is, all believe certain basic things about reality that they have no purely factual or demonstrably rational grounds for holding. However, the important questions about these differing beliefs are these: Are they arguable? Are they justifiable? Is there any way to adjudicate their conflicting truth claims? Can some beliefs be eliminated as false and others be established as true? If so, by what method or test for truth? Fideists do not face these questions squarely, or if they do, they tend to provide nonfideistic answers, such as that to believe otherwise is contrary to one's experience, to reason, or to one's hope for the future, or that it brings undesired results. However, to answer this way is to return to rationalism or to move on to experientialism or pragmatism as a test for truth. This is no longer methodological fideism.

Fideism Faces a Dilemma of Justification. Either fideism makes a truth claim or it does not. If not, then it is not even in the ballpark of true. If it does make a truth claim, then either it offers a justification for it or else it does not. If it offers a justification for what it believes, then it is no longer fideist. If it does not, then it is left with an unjustified truth claim. Or, to put it another way, the fideist either has a reason for being a fideist or does not. A fideist who has a reason for being a fideist is no longer a fideist. One who does not has an unreasonable belief.

Plantinga once responded to this dilemma by claiming his justification for fideism ("properly basic" beliefs) was optional. In this case, the dilemma can be reworded this way. Either a justification for fideism is essential (not optional), or else it is not. If it is essential, then giving a justification for fideism is essential to fideism, and fideism is no longer fideism (since it agrees, contrary to fideism, that justifications for our truth claims are essential). If it is not essential to fideism to give a justification for its truth claims, then this leads to a final problem—there is no way to justify one faith-based truth claim over contrary faith-based truth claims.

Fideism Has No Way to Adjudicate between Contrary Truth Claims. This leaves fideists in the untenable position of not being able to establish the difference between truth and falsity. Opposite views (and worldviews) cannot both be true (this is a violation of the law of noncontradiction). But if fideism is correct, then we have no way to establish which one is true.

In short, fideism is an inadequate test for a worldview since it cannot judge one worldview over another. For if there are no rational or evidential tests for the truth claims of different worldviews, then there is no way to know which one is true, as opposed to the other mutually exclusive worldviews.

Summary and Conclusion

Fideism provides many significant insights into the total picture of religious knowing, such as the stress on the personal, subjective, and existential dimensions. However, as a test for truth of a

worldview (such as Christian theism), fideism is entirely inadequate because it offers no real test. Contrary beliefs can be "experienced" or claimed to be true by fideists, but unless there is some rational or objective way to adjudicate these conflicting claims, the truth question cannot be settled. At the bare minimum, fideists must allow the principle of noncontradiction to be a negative test for truth, or else there would be no way to distinguish the true from the false. As has already been shown (in chap. 1), there is no way to deny the validity of the law of noncontradiction without employing it in the very denial. This too is a self-destructive movement in total fideism. Fideists must either justify their beliefs (which destroys fideism) or else disqualify their claim to truth.

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4
Experientialism

As was observed in the previous chapter, fideism often involves an implicit appeal to experience as the test for the truth of its belief. Pascal appealed to the heart's experience of God, and Kierkegaard and Barth to a personal encounter with God through Christ. Both psychologically and logically fideism reduces to experientialism, but technically speaking the difference between fideism and experientialism is that the former neither claims nor offers any test for truth, whereas experientialism offers experience as the final court of appeal. The experience may be special or general, private or available generally, but it is the self-attesting character of experience that verifies the truth-attached claim.

The experiential "proof" for religious beliefs is characteristic of both Christian mysticism and pietism. It is sometimes offered with intellectual sophistication and at other times held with everyday naïveté. The purpose of this chapter will be to show that, despite its essential contributions to religion, experientialism is not an adequate test for the truth of Christian belief.

An Exposition of Some Major Forms of Experientialism

Not every experientially based religious position uses experience as a test for truth. There is an important difference between the source of one's beliefs and the warrant for holding them. Some of the following positions tend to use experience for both; others primarily have their grounding in experience. Both types are included because of the appeal of experientialism, which is sometimes used only as a source for truth in one view but offered as a warrant for truth in another view.

Plotinus (d. AD 270): Mystical Experience as the Test for Religious Truth

A case can be made that since the time of Plotinus, Western philosophy is largely a series of footnotes on his work (third century AD).[91] His influence extends far beyond those who recognize it. It is not only Christian mysticism but Hegelian, Heideggerian, Kantian, Wittgensteinian, existential, and pragmatic thought that find roots in Plotinus. His description of the ultimate, ineffable, intuitive experience of God has formed most of Western mystical thought and bears a parallel resemblance to Eastern mysticism.

A Brief Sketch of Plotinian Pantheistic Mysticism. In Plotinus, Platonism flowers into Neoplatonism, and the rational comes to fruition in the mystical. The Greeks' quest for being ends in the One beyond all being, and knowledge is fulfilled in noncognitive intuition. The quest for unity leads to the One beyond rational duality. The ultimate experience is an indescribable encounter of the ineffable Source of all being, which is experienced only by mystical union.

"God" for Plotinus is the One beyond all knowing and being. God has neither knowledge, being, nor personality; God consists only of absolute unity. However, this unity unfolds into Mind (Gk.

Nous) as necessarily as a flower unfolds from its seed, and this Mind unfolds into Soul, and other minds and souls (6.8.9 and 5.1.8).[92] There is a whole hierarchy of beings from greatest (Mind) to least, which is Matter (2.4.11). The more being something has, the greater its unity is, right on up to Mind, which is a basic unity of knower and known. The only absolute unity with no duality of even knower and known is the unknown and the Unknower (the One). The less being things have, the less unity they have, until we reach at last the most multiple of all, Matter. Matter is the point at which, if being became more multiple, it would become absolute nonbeing (2.4.12). Indeed, Matter is relative nonbeing, for it is the mere capacity for being with no being of its own. In like manner, the more unity something has, the greater good it is, and the less unity, the more evil a thing is. Hence, *Nous* is the best and Matter is the worst of all things (1.8.7). The One is the Source of all good and being, but it has neither itself, for "he had no need of being, who brought it to be" (6.8.19). Likewise, what need for good is there in the Source of all good? And surely there is no duality in the Source of all duality, any more than there is multiplicity in the center from which the many radii emerge.

God transcends not only all good and all being, but also all knowing. Only being can be known; the mind cannot know what is not (5.6.6). How, then, can one even speak of "God" or the "One" if it is entirely beyond intelligibility? And how can a person experience God without even knowing he or she is having the experience? The answer to the first question is that we name God only negatively and from the emanations of God. Even the "name, The One, contains really no more than the negation of plurality," and "if we are led to think positively of The One, name and thing, there would be more truth in silence" (5.5.6). "The One is in truth beyond all statement" (5.3.13). The statements we do make about it are simply about things that come from it. God causes goodness, being, and knowledge. Hence, we call God Good and Being, but it does not have either goodness, being, or knowledge. That is, "The One is all things and no one of them; the source of all things is not all things; and yet it is all things in a transcendent sense" (5.2.1). In reality, "it eludes our knowledge, so that the nearer approach to it is through its offspring" (6.9.5). In short, although we cannot speak *it*, we are able to speak *about* it in terms of what comes *from* it (5.3.14). In and of itself, the One is absolutely unknowable and unspeakable. And "if we nevertheless speak of it and write about it, we do so only to give direction, to stimulate toward that vision beyond discourse" (6.9.4). In short, all such language is essentially negative—that is, of what God is not. Any positive ascriptions are at best pointers or indicators without descriptive content and are based on what God produces, but does not possess (6.7.15).

God as Experienced Only by Mystical Intuition or Union. If God cannot be described, how can we even know that we are experiencing God? The answer for Plotinus involves rejecting the question. God cannot be *known*, for God is literally the Unknowable; God can only be *felt* or intuited by mystical union. Of course, humanity, bound by sense and body to material multiplicity, is a long way from home. Humans are "busy about many things" (1.3.4). Seeing that our soul is "befouled by its housing, made fragmentary by corporeal extension," Plotinus urges humans to turn inward and upward to the true Source of all unity. "Let us flee then to the beloved Fatherland," he wrote (1.6.8). This is accomplished by asceticism (purification from the multiple things of the sense world) (1.3.6). The first unity realized as one moves from the external to the internal, from the sensible to the intellectual, is unity with the *Nous*. Our mind merges with Mind; our thoughts find their ultimate basis in Thought (5.3.4). Mind, however, involves a basic duality of knower and known; hence, ultimate unity must move on to yet loftier heights.

Since "the Supreme is not known intellectually" (6.7.35), one desiring to experience "what transcends the Intellectual attains by putting away all that is of the intellect" (5.5.6). Awareness of the

One "comes to us neither by science nor by pure thought . . . but by a presence which is superior to science. . . . We must therefore arise above science [philosophy] and never withdraw from unity" (6.9.4, Katz trans.). In order to know the Supreme, one must be "merged with the Supreme, sunken into it, one with it: centre coincides with centre" (6.9.10). Just as one must "become godlike and each [one] beautiful who cares to see God and Beauty," so a person must become one with the One in order to experience the One (1.6.9). The mind puts away all multiplicity, including that involved in thought, so that "alone it may receive the Alone" (6.7.34). In this exalted mystical union, "no longer is there thing seen and light to show it . . . ; this is the very radiance that brought both Intellect and Intellectual object into being" (6.7.36). In point of fact, "only by a leap [from the intellectual] can we reach to this One which is to be pure of all else" (5.5.4). And the person who experiences this mystical union does so by "coalescence, unification; but in seeking thus to know the Unity it is prevented by that very unification from recognizing that it has found." Once the union is attained, the mind "cannot distinguish itself from the object of this intuition" (6.9.3).

The Self-Attesting Nature of the Mystical Experience. This ineffable experience of God cannot be compelled but must simply be prepared for. "We must not run after it, but fit ourselves for the vision and then wait tranquilly for its appearance, as the eye waits on the rising of the sun, which in its own time appears above the horizon" (5.5.8). But "if one does not succeed in enjoying this spectacle, . . . if one does not rise in a purified state but retains within oneself something that separates one from the One, if one is not yet unified enough . . . one has no one to blame but oneself and should try to become pure by detaching oneself from everything" (6.9.4, Katz trans.). In short, the experience is both unknowable and inexpressible. It is a self-attesting awareness of the Transcendent in which one is absolutely alone with the Alone, one with the One. The experience is its own "proof." There is neither reason nor evidence applicable to it. One either has had it or has not. Those who have had it need no other "proof," and those who have not will never be so convinced until they have experienced it themselves (6.7.34 and 6.9.4).

Friedrich Schleiermacher's (1768–1834) Experience of Absolute Dependence

Unlike Plotinus, Friedrich Schleiermacher built religion on a general experience rather than a special mystical experience. The feeling of absolute dependence was for Schleiermacher something possessed by all humans, even by those who did not identify it with religion. Although Schleiermacher did not test the truth of religious statements or expression simply on the religious experience behind them, nonetheless such experience was the basis of his system. His view of religious experience is the groundwork for much later pietistic appeal to the experience itself as "proof" of the truth of religion.

Experience as the Basis of All Religion. According to Schleiermacher, humans reject religion as a general idea arbitrarily conceived, but to do so is to look only at the shell and reject the kernel. In view of this, Schleiermacher exhorts his contemporaries to "turn from everything usually reckoned religion, and fix your regard on the inward emotions and dispositions."[93] Dogma is only the echo of religion; true religion is an immediate feeling of the Infinite and Eternal. And since religion is an inner sense of the Absolute, we cannot understand it by an examination of the outward manifestations of religion but only by a study of ourselves. The contrast between inner state and outward statements of religion will help focus his meaning. True religion is related to doctrine the way the original sound is related to an echo. Religion is based in experience, and creeds are only expressions of that experience. One is the feeling and the other a form; religious experience is the "stuff" of religion, and

religious language and ritual are its structure. The experience of God is the primary reality, and religious thought is but a later reflection on that reality.[94]

Another context is helpful in understanding Schleiermacher's concept of religious experience. Ethics is a way of living, science is a way of thinking, but religion is a way of feeling. It is not just any way of feeling, but the feeling of being utterly dependent on the All. Again, ethics is a way of acting, and science is a way of knowing, whereas religion is a way of being or sensing one's dependence. Religion does not influence specific ethical actions. However, it does influence the way a person behaves in the sense that a sum total of actions flows from the inner unity religion brings to one's life. So, "while a man does nothing from religion, he should do everything with religion."[95] In like manner, religion influences science, not directly but indirectly, for piety removes the presumption to knowledge, which is ignorance. Finally, the ethical life is one of self-control, but the religious life is one of self-surrender. Thus ethics operates in the practical realm, science in the intellectual, but religion in the intuitional realm.

The Nature of Religious Intuition. According to Schleiermacher, the way to understand religion is by an examination of the intuition at the very root of it. But once we begin even to think about this intuition we are already separated from it. The moment of religious experience is so fleeting that it perishes the very moment it appears. Religion can be experienced but not expressed as such.

The essence of religion is a feeling of piety that results from the operation of God on the soul by means of the world. This feeling is universal, but the ideas by which humans express this feeling are foreign to the religious experience itself. No description is equal to the intuition being described. This is why religion cannot be learned by rote. The religious feeling cannot be taught; it must be caught. Schleiermacher is careful to point out, however, that "what we feel and are conscious of in religious emotion is not the nature of things, but their operation on us." Religious feeling does not reach reality or things-in-themselves (Kant's noumenal realm). We sense only the ceaseless operations of the multitudinous forms of the infinite upon us. And religion does not consist in submitting to any one of the endless variety of these forms individually or in isolation but only to the Whole of which they are part. "The sum total of religion is to feel that in the highest unity, all that moves us is one; to feel that aught single and particular is only possible by means of this unity; to feel, that is to say, that our being and living is a being and living in and through God."[96] However, the religious feeling is not to be confused with the feeling of the majesty and greatness of the material boundlessness of the universe. The latter is only an "arithmetic amazement" that is both finite and calculable. Such is only a feeling of personal incapacity; it is a religious feeling in kind but not in extent. However, neither is mysticism the essence of religious intuition. All truly religious people have mystical traits, but the mystic is turned inward and does not know how to go beyond this.

Schleiermacher summarizes the nature of religious life as follows: "The whole religious life consists of two elements, that man surrender himself to the Universe and allow himself to be influenced by the side that is turned toward him in one part," and second, "that he transplant this contact which is one definite feeling, within, and take it up into the inner unity of his life and being. . . . The religious life is nothing else than the constant renewal of this proceeding."[97]

The Commonality and Universality of Religious Intuition. The basic religious experience is the same for all humans, but religious systems fashion themselves in endless variety, even down to individual personalities. This multiplicity is necessary for the complete manifestation of religion; there is no universal religion common to all any more than there is only one way to be related to God. However, nothing is possible for the individual except through the unity of the Whole. Further, since religion is not constituted by ideas, the concepts of true and false do not apply to it. All religions are

"good" and "true" in an infinite variety of forms. We need not attempt to bring all these feelings and beliefs together. Rather, it is sufficient to open up an experience of the original Unity of all things for those who have not had it. In this respect, religion is the capacity for many-sidedness not found elsewhere. Science, morality, and philosophy are limited and narrow, but religion is the sworn enemy of narrow-mindedness and one-sidedness.[98]

The aim of religion is the love of the World-Spirit, and this World-Spirit is received through the love of humanity. This longing love is the essence of religion. So in order to discover the best in religion, we must enter what we love the most. Humanity must be sought in each individual, for each is a revelation of the Infinite. However, each must be contemplated as part of the Whole; in the face of the Whole each individual ego must vanish in humility. We have an intuition of the Whole only in fellowship with others who have been freed from dependence on their own being by dependence on the All. Yet since each human is a compendium of humanity, each can love him- or herself with a pure and blameless love as one in whom the Infinite has been discovered.[99]

The religious intuition is not different in kind from other feelings. Rather, it is the sum of all higher feelings. It is a feeling not found easily in nature but more easily found in ourselves and transferred to nature. The universe reveals itself in our inner life, and in this way the corporeal is comprehensible through the spiritual. This inner feeling of the universe makes us whole and unified. Dogmas are formed as a result of reflecting on this feeling, but they are merely general expressions of definite feelings. Dogmas are not necessary for religious life and aid little in the communication of it. In order to be religious, one need only be conscious of this feeling—not just any feeling but a feeling wherein one's whole being is related to the Whole. God is essential to religion via his presence in our feeling of dependence. But this is not to be confused with the idea of God, which is merely a reflection on this feeling. Depending on one's personal needs, there is a tendency to conceptualize God in one way or another. Those who are content with mysterious obscurity tend to think of God pantheistically; those who seek definiteness in thought generally view God theistically. Both are based on the same basic religious intuition, which is the important thing. Irreligion is not to have God in the consciousness; it does not consist in whether one views God personally or impersonally. Hence, theism is not the beginning or end of religion, nor is personal immortality necessarily involved. "Immortality" should be understood experientially—namely, in the sense of enjoying life by giving up to the Infinite. It is a pious longing to be one with the Infinite and Eternal in the midst of our finitude and temporality.[100]

Every human has an inborn capacity for religion that infallibly develops unless it is crushed by culture. The World-Spirit is revealed to every person at least once. Certain points in life, such as birth and death, provide openings to the Infinite and are surrounded by it. However, the Infinite may be discovered from all levels of consciousness: from the ego (as in Eastern mysticism), from the outer world (as in Egyptian polytheism), or from our sense of art (as in the Greeks). Again, the important thing is not the direction of approach so much as the basic intuition of the Divine or awareness of the All, which one experiences through it. "Have you not often felt this holy longing?" Schleiermacher asked. "Become conscious of the call of your deepest nature and follow it, I conjure you."[101]

To summarize, there is at the level of consciousness a sense of being related to the Whole, an awareness of one's identity with the All. The individual stands utterly dependent on "God" for existence; it is a felt relation of absolute dependence. No thinking or acting on a person's part can change this fundamental sense of contingency. The core of religion is in this intuition, or this deep-seated feeling, of finitude. No description of it can replace it, nor can rational process produce it.

And yet it is an experience natural to all humans if culture has not crushed it. Truth and falsity do not apply to this feeling, because they are conceptual and it is experiential. The feeling can be verified by its appearance in one's own consciousness. No other "proof" is possible, for the feeling can only be caught and cannot be taught as such.

Rudolf Otto (1869–1937): The Experience of the Numinous

Rudolf Otto continued the analysis of religious experience after Schleiermacher. The central difference in their starting points was noted by Otto. Schleiermacher had begun with the feeling of dependence and moved from there to "God." For Otto, the "Holy" is taken as the primary datum, and a feeling of dependence results from this. Otto works from the top down, we may say, and Schleiermacher works from the bottom up.

The Characteristics of a Religious Experience. According to Otto, all religious experience involves an awareness of the "Holy" or the "Numen."[102] A religious experience, then, is a numinous experience. The divine as such can be felt but not thought. However, it is essential to religion to have both the mystical and rational aspects. The rational is essential to but not exhaustive of God. The "Holy" is a necessary a priori category for the understanding of the suprarational aspects of religion.

There are five characteristics of a religious experience. Essentially, it is an experience of the *mysterium tremendum* (fearful mystery). The first three characteristics are associated with its terribleness, and the last two with its mysteriousness. First, a religious experience is one of *Awefulness*. It involves a sense of awe or religious dread. Second, there is in a religious experience an awareness of *Overpoweringness*—that is, of the unapproachable majesty of the Divine. Third, there is an awareness of *Energy* or *Urgency*, which is expressed in emotion or force. These three characteristics together compose the *tremendum*. Fourth, the religious person is conscious of the *Wholly Other*. It is beyond intelligibility and causes blank wonder in the beholder. Fifth, just as the Wholly Other repels, so there is an attractive element in the Holy—namely, that of *Fascination*. This element allures or captivates the religious person.[103]

Otto is convinced that the experience of the Holy is neither derived from nor reducible to other feelings. It differs in kind from other experiences. It may on occasion be excited by other feelings, particularly by an aesthetic experience, which is closely associated with the religious, for the sense of the sublime is sometimes closely related to the sense of the Supreme.

The Schematization of Religious Experience. The aesthetic may be used to schematize the religious in the same way that nonrational sex instincts surface and are concretized in one's personal feeling. The rational schematization of religious experience is by no means unimportant to Otto. On the contrary, he believed it to be the most important part of salvation history, for by an interpenetration of the nonrational and the rational, our concepts of God are deepened, not blurred. So the "Holy" is a complex a priori category with both rational and nonrational elements in it. And the connection between them is felt as self-evident. Hence, all humans have the form or capacity for religion, just as all *can* sing, even though some do not. The concept of the Holy did not evolve; its first appearance was unique. Its earliest manifestations were crude (e.g., magic, manna) but were elevated when it became manifest in higher feeling and thought. The Holy is occasioned by sensation but springs from the depth of the soul.[104]

The *tremendum* is schematized by the "Wrath of God," and the *mysterium* is schematized by the "Grace of God." This rationalization of the nonrational dimensions of the Numen guards against both rationalism and mysticality. Rationalism is ruled out since the source and depth of religion spring

from experience of the nonrational. Mysticality is eliminated because schematization, or rationalizing the Numen, is essential to understanding and expressing the religious experience. A balance between the rational and the mystical elements is the measure of the value of a religion. And on this ground, Otto concluded that Christianity was the most valuable religion, for Christ was more than a prophet; he was one in whom the Spirit dwelt in all his plentitude (mystical aspect) and yet who was the most perfect object of religious experience (objective, rational aspect).

The Communication of Religious Feelings. The Holy not only cannot be thought but also cannot be taught as such, for the rational has no meaning without the inner spirit. The *tremendum* element is communicated best by imaginative sympathy, gestures, attitudes, holy situations, living fellowship, and personal contact. Basically, it must be caught and not taught. Likewise, the *mysterium* is revealed directly via miracles and quasi-intelligible religious language and indirectly by way of the sublime (e.g., in architecture). Darkness summons the mystical, silence calls forth a spontaneous response, and emptiness evokes otherness, but there is no purely cognitive or creedal way to produce a religious experience. All humans have the capacity for religious awareness of the Holy, but the experience cannot be evoked by purely rational means. The religious experience stands on its own. It can be expressed but not exhausted. One can sense but not systematize the Holy. One can feel it but never really completely formulate it. Conceptualization of this consciousness is not possible. Schemata can be made of it and rationalization about it, but these are like Kant's categories—they are not truly descriptive of it. They cannot be, for the Holy is and remains Wholly Other. It can be felt but not thought in anything but purely negative concepts. The mystery of the Holy can be experienced but not really expressed.[105]

God and the Inexpressible. Many mystics both before and after Otto have emphasized the inexpressibility of God. Mystical emphases from Pseudo-Dionysius to Meister Eckhart and on to Thomas à Kempis and modern pietism have stressed the ineffability of God. Thomas McPherson wrote: "There are some things that just cannot be said. . . . We ought not to try to express the inexpressible. The things that theologians try to say (or some of them) belong to the class of things that just cannot be said. The way out of the worry is retreat into silence."[106]

McPherson claimed a similarity of his view to that of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who wrote much the same in the last line of the *Tractatus*: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."[107] Both men believe that God is actually inexpressible because he is mystical. That is to say, "the feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling," but then we cannot ask *why* the world is this way. According to Wittgenstein, "*how* the world is" can be meaningfully asked, but not the fact *that* the world is. To ask, Why is there a world anyway? is to ask the unaskable question. We can feel our creatureliness or the limitedness of the world, but we cannot ask why it is this way. It is mystical and inexpressible and, therefore, unaskable.

By way of this analysis, McPherson concludes from Wittgenstein that skepticism about religious experience is senseless. As the latter put it, "Doubt can only exist where there is a question; a question only where there is an answer, and this only where something *can* be *said*." Since God's existence is unsayable, it is likewise undoubtable. From this, McPherson suggests that we conclude that positivistic philosophy "can be interpreted as a return to the truth about religion," for "Otto travels the same road as Wittgenstein. Are we to call Otto an enemy of religion? Why not call Wittgenstein its friend?" "By showing, in their own way, the absurdity of what theologians try to utter, positivists have helped to suggest that religion belongs to the sphere of the unutterable. . . . Positivists may be the enemies of theology, but the friends of religion."[108]

For both Otto and Wittgenstein, religious experience is inexpressible.

Of course there are many more forms of religious experience. For a classical analysis of them, William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is one of the best. Winfried Corduan and I constructed a typology of them in our *Philosophy of Religion* (part 1).[109] Jonathan Edwards argued for the uniqueness of a Christian conversion experience in his famous book *A Treatise concerning Religious Affections*.

On an experiential level, perhaps the most widespread evangelical use of religious experience is found in the charismatic movement.

Summary of Some Important Tenets of Experientialism

Experientialists differ as to the nature of religious experience, but there are some common strains of emphasis among them. Not all of these elements will be true of each particular thinker discussed above. Together, however, they will aid in characterizing the experiential test for truth.

1. The *sine qua non* of all religious truth is religious experience. Truth does not rest in formal abstractions from or about experience; truth is primarily experienced and only secondarily expressed. Without a primary awareness of God, no one can claim to have the truth about God.

2. Experience is the final court of appeal for religious truth. There is no more ultimate standard for deciding truth than experience. Appeal to ideas, principles, or propositions fails unless they are filled with and based on the "stuff" of experience. One cannot determine the truth of an experience by a statement or expression about it; on the contrary, the validity of any statement is based on the experience behind it.

3. A religious experience is ultimately self-verifying. There is no outside source by which a religious experience can be validated as real or genuine; the experience of God (the Holy, etc.) is self-sufficient. The authenticity of religious experience rests not in any external evidential or rational justification—these are secondary spinoffs at best—but in the very nature of the religious experience as such.

4. God, or Ultimate Reality (whatever it is named), is actually indescribable. Words cannot capture religious consciousness; God can be evoked but not really expressed. The Divine is literally inexpressible. God can be felt but not really thought.

An Evaluation of Experientialism

There is an apparent plausibility about experientialism vis-à-vis rationalism that immediately commends itself to many minds. From this, we may unpack several positive features of experientialism before attempting to penetrate its methodological inadequacies.

Some Positive Features of Experientialism

Experientialism stands as a polar opposite to formalism in religion. Propositional and creedal truths are, as such, existentially inept and inadequate. Experience is necessary to religion, and within this context several valuable insights of experientialism emerge.

1. Experientialism is an antidote for formalism in religion. As noted above, religion is based in experience, and creeds are only expressions of that experience. Religious experience is the "stuff,"

and religious language and ritual are the structure based on it. Without experience, creeds are an empty shell. Pure creedalism is dead without the life of a religious experience.

2. Experience is the "stuff" out of which religious truth is built. Without a basic source or root in experience, there is no meaningful religious expression of the experience. Apart from our consciousness of God there would be no valid conceptualizations about him, for all affirmations about the Divine presuppose some prior awareness of him. The real content of religion is, and must be, grounded in experience, whatever form the construction of that content may take.

3. Another contribution follows from the preceding one; namely, in the broad sense of the term experience must be the final court of appeal. This follows for a very simple reason: nothing is broader than experience. In one sense, even reasoning is an intellectual "experience." There are primary experiences such as consciousness of God and secondary experiences such as one's conceptualizations and cogitations about God. But all is experience; that is, all involves a consciousness or awareness of something or someone, or at least by someone.

4. Without experience in the broad sense of the term, all conceptualization and propositionalizing about it would be contentless. Reason gives form to experience, but experience gives content to reason. Both are necessary. While there are no personal truths, there are truths about persons and our relationship to them.

Some Crucial Difficulties with Experientialism

Despite the important contributions just mentioned, experientialism as a test for the truth of a worldview is decidedly insufficient for several reasons.

1. It is a confusion of categories to speak of a *true* experience. Experience, in the primary sense, is neither true nor false. Experience is something one *has*, and truth is something one *expresses* about one's experience of reality. That is, experience is a *condition* of persons, but truth is a characteristic of *propositions* or expressions persons make. Hence, no experience as such is true; one simply has the experience or the awareness. But once one begins to make affirmations about that awareness or experience, these statements are subject to the test of truth or falsity.

2. An experience cannot be used to support or prove the truth of that experience, for to use experience to prove the truth claimed about that experience is to beg the whole question. At best the only truth established by an experience is the truth that the person has had that experience, and this is private to the individual who has had that experience. The *basis* of truth rests in the experience, but not the *support* of that truth. Truth finds its *source* in primary experience, but not its *substantiation*. The *whence* of religious truth is rooted in religious experience, but the warrant for claiming truth for this is something else.

3. No experience as such is self-interpreting. Experiences as such do not come with reliable truth labels on them. Even when truth labels are placed on experiences, other truth labels are possible. Like "facts," experiences must be interpreted. Just as all facts are interpra-facts, even so all experiences are interpra-experiences. The question is, which interpretation is the correct one? To use a biblical example, the same phenomenon (noise in the sky) was interpreted three different ways in John 12:28, 29. Some took it as the voice of God, others as an angel speaking, and some as thunder. *That* there was some common phenomenon need not be questioned, but *what* it meant differed in accordance with the overall perspective taken by the perceivers. So the event itself was not self-interpreting; meaning is given to an event by the context in which one sees it. Since a worldview is an overall interpretation of *all* facts and experiences, there is no valid way to use any particular

experience within that overall interpretive framework to establish the overall framework or worldview. Following from this is another criticism.

4. Experiences are capable of different interpretations. Different systems account for different experiences in different ways. The experience that the theist calls "conversion" may be explained by the naturalistic psychologist as a subliminal explosion caused by repression followed by frustration with one's way of life.[110] Likewise, the naturalistic scientist may explain the event a Christian calls miraculous healing as an anomaly or unusual natural event for which there is no known explanation. Each major worldview is able to account, on its own grounds, for all the data of experience. The pantheist interprets evil as a "persistent illusion" and pain as an "error of moral mind," and so on. The pantheist does not need to deny that someone feels or experiences pain, but merely points out that there is no ultimate reality to such sensible experiences. Now if conflicting worldviews such as theism, pantheism, and naturalism can explain all of the facts and experiences in the world, then no one of these views can have its truth claim justified by experience in the face of the others.

All worldviews have a basis in experience and a way of explaining it, and it will not suffice to plead special case for some particular experiences over others, since they can all make the same plea. On what basis would one decide which experience is "key" or "special"? There is no way within experience to mediate this dispute without arguing in a circle, and any appeal outside experience defeats the whole experiential test for truth. But if opposing worldviews have equal access to experience and no way within primary experience alone to differentiate and distinguish some experiences as "special" or "key," then one is forced to go beyond pure experience to reasoning or interpretation of experience in order to support truth claims about that experience. But having gone beyond primary experience as a test for truth, one no longer, strictly speaking, has an experiential test for truth.

Of course, there is always the overall and broad sense in which everything including reasoning is an experience, but this is not helpful in solving the dilemma. One can always ask the warrant for choosing one interpretation given by reason rather than another. What warrant is there for viewing the primary experience through pantheistic eyes rather than theistic ones? This cannot be justifiably answered by a circular appeal right back to the primary experience, since several conflicting worldviews can make the same move. And if the appeal is made to something beyond the primary experience such as reason or interpretation, then we may immediately ask again for the justification for one interpretation over another.

5. Another criticism emerges from the previous one. Namely, in the final analysis, one cannot even talk meaningfully about experience without employing cognitive categories that are at least formally independent of that experience. Experience *as such* has no meaning. It is pure "stuff" with no structure; it is content without form. And consciousness of something without conceptualization or predication of it is cognitively meaningless. No experience is even meaningful unless it is describable. But therein is the problem for the experientialist, who would like to believe that a religious experience at least is self-interpreting, that it comes with its own structure. However, this is highly problematic, for those who have made the most careful analysis of religious experience use quite different ways to describe it: "ultimate commitment"; "feeling of absolute dependence"; a "numinous experience"; an "existential encounter"; and so on. Those who have attempted to determine any common content to all these descriptions seem to arrive at only purely formal and interchangeable definitions. Indeed, to be consistent to experientialism, we must admit that all the *content* of these concepts comes from experience. But since it is precisely how to define or form this content of experience that is in question, it would beg the question to argue that the meaning of

"absolute dependence" is based on experience. As we have already seen, experience as such has no truth or meaning apart from the framework or interpretation given it. So experientialism is in the dilemma of not being able to understand the experience without the interpretation and not being able to have an interpretation unless it is derived from the experience. And there is no purely experiential way out of the dilemma.

6. At this point, a word should be said of the mystical way out. Is it self-defeating for experientialists to speak of the experience without being able to describe it but only to evoke it? How would one know that it was the "it" being evoked, and how can one know the "it" without knowing something about *what* it is in distinction from what it is not? As with Kant's noumenal realm, one cannot know pure that-ness without knowing something of what it is. Likewise, one cannot speak of the unspeakable or describe the indescribable and express the inexpressible without engaging in a self-defeating activity. McPherson candidly admits the problem but does not offer a successful solution when he writes, "Otto, then, uses language in order to explain what cannot be said in language," for he "is writing about the non-rational in a supremely rational way."[111] But like Wittgenstein, McPherson wishes us to believe that this allegedly descriptive language is not really descriptive but only evocative. It is a kind of descriptive ladder by which we get to the point where we recognize that God cannot really be described. In response, it should be observed that if the descriptive ladder is able to get one to the religious "roof," then it is self-defeating to thereupon kick the ladder down and deny that the ladder is able to do what the ladder did indeed do. If the ladder enables us to arrive at God as opposed to the devil or at good as versus evil, then our mystical or religious experience cannot be totally devoid of cognitive content. If it were, then we could not even make meaningful denials of it. In short, the very affirmation that "no cognitively meaningful statements can be made about God" either is itself a totally meaningless statement (and therefore cannot be true) or else is wholly self-defeating, since it just made a meaningful assertion about God to the effect that no meaningful statements about God can be made.

Even good feelings are not a valid test for truth. For one can have a good feeling that is based on a false report, such as, "You have won $20 million!" And one can have a bad feeling based on a true report—namely, "That previous report was wrong. You have not won $20 million." The truth is that experiences, even good ones, are not a reliable test for truth. Feelings are not a *test* for truth; they are a means of *expressing* that truth. For example, a person who knows he or she has won $20 million will get excited about it. Martin Luther put it well when he said, "Feelings come, and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the Word of God, and nothing else is worth believing." Unless one has some objective standard by which to measure the experience, one has no way of knowing the truth value of the experience.

Summary and Conclusion

Experientialism claims that all truth is determined by experience and that there is a recognizable and self-attesting religious experience. As a *source* and basis of truth, the experientialist's claim may be correct, but as a *test* or warrant for the truth of that claim, it is decidedly lacking. No experience is self-interpreting, and there are conflicting truth claims built on experience with no purely experiential way to adjudicate between them. Experience is merely a condition of persons, whereas truth is a characteristic of propositions. One must have some justification for having interpreted the raw data of the experience itself one way over the other. Further, the retreat to mystical and inexpressible

experience is inadequate because it is both self-defeating to meaningfully describe the indescribable and impossible to recognize or distinguish it from anything else unless it is describable. In brief, no religious experience as such is either understandable or justifiable apart from some truth framework independent or separate from the experience itself. Experientialism either is meaningless, is self-defeating, or begs the issue.

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5
Evidentialism

Unlike most religions, Christianity has evidential claims that can be verified or falsified. This appeal to evidence is threefold. Some appeal to evidence for the past (historical verification). Others appeal to evidence in the present, and still others appeal to future evidence (eschatological verification). Since the future evidence is not available to verify truth claims in the present, it will be only briefly touched upon. The appeal to evidence in the present can be either experiential (see chap. 4) or else empirical (scientific). The primary focus of this chapter will be on past evidence, particularly on evidence for the unique Christian claim for the life, miracles, and resurrection of Christ. The appeal primarily to the evidence for the resurrection is sometimes called historical apologetics.

The Appeal to Past Evidence: Historical Verification

Christianity makes unique historical claims. It is based on the belief that a historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, actually lived, claimed to be God in human flesh, offered miracles in support of his claim, was crucified, and a few days later rose bodily from the dead. The truth of these claims depends on whether one can have an objective understanding of (a) past events in general and (b) supernatural events in particular. Since the latter is the subject of part 3 in this volume, only the former will be discussed in this chapter.

The Historical Claims of Christianity

The heart of the Christian claim is the "gospel." It is defined in the New Testament as follows:

> Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. (1 Cor. 15:1–8)

Clearly, at the basis of the gospel is the claim that Christ actually lived, died, and rose physically from the dead. Further, it is claimed that over five hundred people actually encountered him in his risen body. So important is the historicity of this event to the core of Christian truth that the apostle Paul is willing to affirm a few verses later that seven disastrous consequences follow from denying the historicity of the resurrection:

> And if Christ has not been raised, then [1] our preaching is in vain and [2] your faith is in vain. [3] We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. . . . And if Christ has not been raised, [4] your faith is futile and [5] you are still in your sins. Then [6] those also who have

fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, [7] we are of all people most to be pitied. (1 Cor. 15:14–15, 17–19)

It is evident from this that the reality of Christianity is based on the historicity of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) on Historical Verification

Noted New Testament scholar C. H. Dodd commented: "It belongs to the specific character of Christianity that it is an historical religion." While "some religions can be indifferent to historical fact, and move entirely on the plane of timeless truth, Christianity cannot," for "it rests upon the affirmation that a series of events happened, in which God revealed Himself in action, for the salvation of men." The Gospels of the New Testament profess to tell us what happened. They do not set out to gratify our curiosity about past events, "but they do set out to nurture our faith upon the testimony to such events." As a historical religion, Christianity is to be contrasted with both mysticism and nature religion. The former concerns itself wholly with humanity's inner life and rejects the world of nature, and the latter recognizes the external world as in some sense a medium of divinity. And while Christianity repudiates neither God's revelation in nature nor his work within the spirit of a human, it stresses that "the eternal God is revealed in history." There is no claim, however, that "the truth about God can be discovered by treating history as a uniform field of observation (like the 'nature' studied in sciences), in which it is possible to collect data from all parts of the field, and to arrive by induction at a conclusion."[112]

John Warwick Montgomery (1931–) on Historical Verification

A strong historical apologetic is offered by John Montgomery in his work *History and Christianity*. Using his legal background, Montgomery argues for the historicity of the New Testament on the basis of the "Ancient Document Rule." He also argues for the legal evidence for the reliability of the New Testament writers based on the laws of evidence set forth by the great legal mind Simon Greenleaf, who applied them to the New Testament witness and was converted to Christianity.

Montgomery wrote: "The narratives of the evangelists are now submitted to the reader's perusal and examination, upon the principles and by the rules already stated. . . . If they had thus testified on oath, in a court of justice, they would be entitled to credit. . . . If so, then it is believed that every honest and impartial man will act consistently with that result, by receiving their testimony in all the extent of its import.[113]

As for miracles, Montgomery insisted: "The problem of 'miracles,' then, must be solved in the realm of historical investigation, not in the realm of philosophical speculation." He accepts the conclusion that "for the critical historian nothing is impossible."[114] The resurrection of Christ is a fact of history—one that confirms the truth of Christianity.

Gary Habermas (1950–) on the Historicity of Jesus

Gary Habermas believes that the resurrection of Christ can be known from critical history. It is the central fact by which we know that Christianity is true and even that God exists. Arguing from the twelve historical facts accepted by most critical scholars, he insists that the best explanation for them is that Jesus actually rose from the dead. He goes so far as to claim that "even by utilizing only four of

these accepted facts, a sufficient case can be made for the historicity of the resurrection."[115] These facts are that (1) Jesus died from crucifixion; (2) the disciples were convinced by subsequent appearances that Jesus rose from the dead; (3) the disciples were transformed by these encounters; and (4) Paul's conversion experience convinced him of the resurrection of Christ.

As for the belief that this is a miracle, Habermas believes that "no event can be rejected a priori unless one assumes and omniscient viewpoint. Since this is impossible, the facts must be examined." Further, "the laws of nature do not disallow any events, but are simply descriptions of how things usually occur." Therefore, "there are many strong reasons to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead." And "in the New Testament, the resurrection of Jesus is not only the central event," but the indispensable event, since without it "faith is actually in vain."[116] From this central fact of the resurrection, Habermas believes that the truths of the existence of God and even the deity of Christ can be demonstrated, and that the basic Christian worldview can be proved via the resurrection.

The Nature of History: Fact and Interpretation

History includes not only a series of facts (chronicling), but an interpretation of those facts. History cannot be a mere "diary" or "chronicle" without context and interpretation, for even here the selection and context of what is recorded provide some meaning to the events recorded. A "historical 'event' is an occurrence *plus* the interest and meaning which the occurrence possessed for the person involved in it, and by which the record is determined." Hence, when we speak of God revealed in history, we mean not only the bare occurrences but also the rich and concrete meaning of these events.[117]

Further, Dodd says, "since events in the full sense of the term are relative to the feelings and judgments of the human mind, the intensity of their significance varies, just as in the individual life, certain crucial experiences have more than everyday significance." Therefore, we can "understand that an historical religion attaches itself not to the whole temporal series indifferently, nor yet to any casual event, but to a particular series of events in which a unique intensity of significance resides." So then, "this selection of a particular series is not incongruous with the nature of history itself," for "the particular, even the unique, is a category entirely appropriate to the understanding of history." And since "one particular event exceeds another in significance, there may well be an event which is uniquely significant, and this event may give a unique character to the whole series to which it belongs." According to Dodd, "this is in fact the assertion which Christianity makes," for "it takes the series of events recorded or reflected in the Bible, from the call of Abraham to the emergence of the Church, and declares that in this series the ultimate reality of all history . . . is finally revealed, because the series is itself controlled by the supreme event of all—the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ." And, Dodd adds, "this valuation of the series is not imposed upon it from without, but is an integral part of the history itself."[118]

Responses to Alleged Problems with the Appeal to Past Evidence

The Problem of the Definition of Objective

Whether history is objective depends on how *objective* is defined. On the one hand, if *objective knowledge* means "absolute knowledge," then of course no human history can be objective. Only an omniscient Mind can be objective in this sense. On the other hand, if *objective history* means "an

accurate and adequate presentation that reasonable human beings should accept," then the door is open to the possibility of objectivity. Assuming this latter sense, we can argue that history can be just as objective as some sciences.[119] For example, historical geology (paleontology) is considered an objective science. It deals with physical facts and processes of the past. However, the events represented by the fossil finds are not any more directly accessible to the scientists or repeatable than are historical events to the historian. The same is true of the science of archaeology.

True, there are some differences. A fossil is a mechanically true imprint of the original event, and eyewitnesses of history may be less accurate in their reports. But the historian may rejoin by pointing out that the natural processes that mar the fossil imprint parallel the personal filtering of events through the testimony of eyewitnesses. At least it may be argued that if one can determine the integrity and reliability of an eyewitness, one cannot slam the door on the possibility of objectivity in history any more than on objectivity in geology.

The Problem of the Unobservability of Events

In none of these sciences does *fact* mean the original event. *Fact* must be taken by both to mean information about the original event, and in this latter sense facts do not exist merely subjectively in the mind of the historian. Facts are objective data whether anyone reads them or not.

What one does with data—that is, what meaning or interpretation one gives to them—can in no way eliminate the data. There remains for both science and history a hard core of objective facts. The door is thereby left open for objectivity in both fields about the past and history. In this way, one may draw a valid distinction between propaganda and history: the former lacks sufficient basis in objective fact, but the latter does not. Indeed, without objective facts, no protest can be raised against either poor history or propaganda. If history is entirely in the mind of the beholder, there is no reason to decide to behold it any way one desires. In this case, there would be no difference between good history and trashy propaganda. But historians, even historical subjectivists, recognize the difference. Hence, even they assume an objective knowledge of history.

History is not like an *empirical* science, in which a repeated pattern of events can be observed directly in the present. History is more like a *forensic* science, in which unobserved and unrepeated events are inferred based on observations in the present. This is known as the principle of analogy or uniformity, according to which the present is the key to the past. Further, just as the forensic scientist has no direct knowledge of the past but only fossil remains in the present, even so, the historian has no direct knowledge of the past but only artifacts and manuscripts that remain in the present. Hence, both the forensic scientist and the historian are reconstructing the past from remains in the present and based on analogies with the present. No one should reject the objectivity of history, in principle, any more than one should reject archaeology or paleontology.

Of course, all of these forensic-type sciences of the past are subject to error in practice, but in principle objectivity is obtainable, just as it is in the case of an unobserved death. The forensic scientist looks at all the evidence remaining in the present and makes a reasonable determination of what occurred in the past. For example, if the scientist finds (1) no signs of anyone breaking into the house, (2) no signs of struggle, (3) a gunshot wound through the right temple, (4) the fingerprints of the deceased on the gun, (5) which is lying nearby on the right side, then he or she can make a reasonable determination that the death was a suicide. And if (6) there is a suicide note nearby in the handwriting of the deceased, it is even more certain that it was a suicide.

Likewise, the historian, admittedly often with less evidence, attempts to piece together the remaining evidence from the past (the "facts") and reconstruct a likely model of what happened. Hence, history is objective in principle in the same manner in which a forensic science is. Indeed, archaeology and paleontology work in the same manner, as does history. All are objective in this sense.

Indeed, it is self-defeating to deny the objectivity of history. How could one know that everyone's knowledge of history was not objective unless one had an objective knowledge of it by which one could determine these other views were not objective. One cannot know "not-that" without knowing "that." In short, the denial of historical objectivity implies an objective knowledge of history.

The Problem of Fragmentary Accounts

Subjectivists also argue that one cannot objectively know the past because of the fragmentary nature of the accounts. This does not follow, because the fragmentary nature of the fossil record does not destroy the objectivity any more than the existence of only a limited number of fossils destroys the objectivity of historical geology. The fossil remains represent only a very tiny percentage of the living beings of the past. This does not hinder scientists from attempting to reconstruct an objective picture of what really happened in geological history. Likewise, the history of humans is transmitted to us by only a partial record. Scientists sometimes reconstruct a whole human on the basis of only partial skeletal remains—even a single jaw bone. While this procedure is sometimes suspect, nonetheless one does not need every bone in order to fill in the probable picture of the whole animal. As in solving a puzzle, with the key pieces one can reconstruct the rest with a measurable degree of probability. For example, by the principle of bilateral similarity, one can assume that the left side of a partial skull would look like the right side that was found.

Of course, the finite reconstruction of both science and history is subject to revision. Subsequent finds may provide new facts that call for new interpretations. But at least there is an objective basis in fact for the meaning attributed to the find. Interpretations can neither create the facts nor ignore them, if they wish to approach objectivity. We may conclude, then, that history need be no less objective than geology simply because it depends on fragmentary accounts. Scientific knowledge is also partial and depends on assumptions and an overall framework that may prove to be inadequate after the discovery of more facts.

The Problem of Value-Laden Language

History is a human reconstruction of the past based on facts and analogies with the present. In view of this, antiobjectivists often point to the inevitable subjectivity of value-laden language, such as, "Hitler was a tyrant." However, that value judgments are difficult, if not impossible, to avoid by no means makes historical objectivity impossible.[120] Hence, objectivity means that when one interprets why these events occurred, the language of the historian should ascribe to these events the value that they really had in their original context. If events are given the value they had within their original context, then an objective account of history is achieved. In this way, objectivity demands value judgments. It cannot avoid them.

The question is not whether value language can be objective, but whether value statements objectively portray the events the way they really were. Once the worldview has been determined, value judgments are not undesirable or merely subjective; they are essential and objectively

demanded. If this is a theistic world, then it would not be objective to place anything but a proper theistic value on the facts of history.

The Problem of Historical Conditioning

The charge that historians are products of their time is not a fatal blow to objectivity. It is true that each person occupies a relative place in the changing events of the spatiotemporal world. However, it does not follow that because the historian is a product of the time, the historian's history is also purely a product of the time. Simply because a person cannot avoid a relative place in history does not mean that the person's perspective cannot attain some meaningful degree of objectivity. This criticism confuses the content of knowledge and the process of attaining it.[121] It confuses the formation of a view with its verification. Where one derives a hypothesis is not essentially related to how its truth can be established. Further, if relativity is unavoidable, then the position of the historical relativists is self-refuting, for either their view is historically conditioned and, therefore, not objective, or else it is not relative but objective. If the latter, then it thereby admits that it is possible to be objective in viewing history.

On the contrary, if the position of historical relativism is itself relative, then it cannot be taken as objectively true. It is simply a subjective opinion that has no basis to claim to be objectively true. In short, if it is a subjective opinion, it cannot eliminate the possibility that history is objectively knowable. And if it is an objective fact about history, then objective facts can be known about history. In the first case, objectivity is not eliminated and, in the second case, relativity is self-defeated. Hence, in either case, objectivity is possible.

Finally, the constant rewriting of history is based on the assumption that objectivity is possible. Why strive for accuracy unless it is believed that the revision is more objectively true than the previous view? Why critically analyze unless improvement toward a more accurate view is the assumed goal? Perfect objectivity may be practically unattainable within the limited resources of the historian on most if not all topics. But be that as it may, the inability to attain 100 percent objectivity is a long way from total relativity. Reaching a degree of objectivity, which is subject to criticism and revision, is a more realistic conclusion than the relativist's conclusion. In short, there is no reason to eliminate the possibility of a sufficient degree of historical objectivity.

The Problem of Selectivity in the Use of Materials

Objectivity in history is also denied because the historian must select materials, which involves subjective judgments. However, this does not automatically make history purely subjective. Jurors make judgments "beyond reasonable doubt" without having all the evidence. If the historian has the relevant and crucial evidence, it will be sufficient to attain objectivity. One need not know everything in order to know something. No scientist knows all the facts, and yet objectivity is claimed for science. As long as no important fact is overlooked, there is no reason to eliminate the possibility of objectivity in history any more than in science.

The selection of facts can be objective to the degree that the facts are selected and reconstructed within the context in which the events represented actually occurred. Since it is impossible for any historian to pack into an account everything available on a subject, it is important to select the points representative of the period of which he or she writes.[122] Condensation does not necessarily imply distortion. The mini can be an objective summary of the maxi.

The Problem of Worldview Perspectives

Since history, contrary to pure chronicling, by its very nature involves one's worldview framework within which to interpret the data, it is argued that no objective view of history is possible. Admittedly, each historian has a worldview and interprets events through this grid. But this in itself does not make objectivity impossible, since there are objective ways to treat the question of worldviews. Without a worldview, it makes no sense to talk about objective meaning.[123] Meaning is system-dependent. Within a given context, but within another system, an event may have a very different meaning. Without a context, meaning cannot be determined, and the context is provided by the worldview and not by the bare facts themselves. Without a metaphysical structure in place, one is simply begging the question with regard to the assumed causal connection and the attributed importance of events. To affirm that facts have "internal arrangement" begs the question. The real question is, how does one know the correct arrangement? Since the facts can be arranged in at least three ways (chaotic, cyclical, and linear), it begs the question merely to assume that one of these is the way the facts were really arranged. The same set of dots can have the lines drawn in many ways.

The assumption that the historian is merely discovering (and not drawing) the lines is gratuitous. The lines are not known to be there apart from an interpretive framework through which one views them. Therefore, the problem of the objective meaning of history cannot be resolved apart from appeal to a worldview. Once the skeletal sketch is known, then one can know the objective placing (meaning) of the facts. However, apart from a structure the mere "stuff" means nothing. Apart from an overall structure there is no way to know which events in history are the most significant, and, hence, there is no way to know the true significance of these and other events in their overall context.

It appears that this is a valid criticism, if one is using history only to establish the truth of a worldview. It is for this reason that the historical method alone is inadequate to establish the truth of Christianity (or any other worldview) purely on the basis of history. For example, one cannot justifiably argue that the resuscitation of the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth—even if it could be established by historical evidence—is a sufficient ground on which to build the entire Christian worldview. It must be interpreted as a miracle (supernatural event) in order to accomplish this task. But it cannot be a supernatural event unless there is a Supernatural Being (God), and to assume the existence of such a Being begs the question. Or, to put it another way, one could not know that such an event was a special act of God without already knowing there was a God who could so act. If such an event (as the resuscitation of a corpse) occurred in a purely naturalistic world, then it could not be properly labeled as anything more than an anomaly. In such an event, it would be proper to look for an explanation, for if there is no supernatural being, then it cannot be a supernatural event. And if this resuscitation of Jesus's corpse is a supernatural event, then one must already have posited a supernatural cause. In short, apart from already positing a supernatural worldview, no event (no matter how unusual it is) could be a supernatural event. Thus historical evidence alone cannot be used to establish the truth of a worldview without prior positing of that worldview on other grounds than the purely historical. In the case of Christianity, historical (or resurrection) apologetics does not work without first establishing the existence of a supernatural Being (God). Historical apologetics as such is inadequate; it must be preceded by a reasoning process by which one established the viability of belief in God.

Response to an Objection from Improbability

The Christian evidentialist sometimes retorts that some events—like a resuscitation of Jesus—are so important that they by themselves call for everything else to be interpreted in the light of them, but this argument fails for several reasons. First, there is no way one can determine from history alone that a resuscitation of a single corpse at a single moment in history is the most important event, in the light of which all other events must be understood.

Second, even if one could determine that it was the most unusual event in the history of humankind, if there is no way to show there is a supernatural Being (God) who caused it, it has no value as a divine confirmation of any truth claims connected with it. Again, in a purely naturalistic world, it would only be a naturalistic event, albeit a very odd one.

Third, the odd does not in itself call for God. Adding zeroes to an improbability does not as such demand a supernatural cause; it merely makes it very odd. Neither does adding more zeroes on the improbability demand a divine cause; it merely makes it very, very odd. And so on. At no point can a legitimate inference be made on the grounds of history alone, from the odd to God.

Response to an Objection of Evidence from Intelligent Design

Some Christian theists argue from the improbability of a natural cause for first life the need for an intelligent designer (God) of life. If this is valid, could not one conclude God is the cause of a similar improbability—the resuscitation of Jesus's corpse? Sir Fred Hoyle estimated that the chances of the first one-celled organism occurring by natural forces alone is $1/10^{40,000}$. From this, he and others concluded that it must have had an intelligent cause.[124]

In response, two observations are in order. First, improbability alone does not demand a divine cause of first life. Improbability is a necessary condition of an intelligent cause of first life, but it is not a sufficient condition. Dry leaves are a necessary condition for being ignited, but not a sufficient condition. A flame is needed to ignite them. To be sure, if spontaneous generation of life from nonlife on earth were a regular event, then it would not need a nonnatural cause (God). However, improbability alone does not call for an intelligent cause of first life. The cause could have been a "luck shot" or intelligent beings from outer space, or in an unlimited number of parallel universes it may not have been that improbable after all by purely natural laws.

Second, it is not simply improbability that demands an intelligent cause; it is the specified complexity of life that calls for an intelligent cause.[125] The only kind of cause known to regularly produce specified complexity, such as that which exists in the genetic code (and in a human language), is an intelligent one. It is not the improbability of natural causes that calls for an intelligent cause, but the presence of specified complexity. But the mere improbability of a known natural cause for the resuscitation of Jesus's corpse is insufficient grounds for positing a supernatural cause of it.

Of course, one could argue that it takes an intelligent cause to inject life in a dead corpse, just as it does to put life into inanimate matter to produce first life. Even if one granted this, it does not follow that this intelligent cause is beyond the universe (as Christians claim); it may be within the universe, as Sir Fred Hoyle[126] or Francis Crick posited.[127] In any event, the resuscitation of the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth (if it happened) would not be proof of a Christian theistic worldview. One would need much more than historical evidence to support this conclusion (see part 3).

The Alleged Unknowability of Miracles

Even if the objectivity of history is accepted, many historians object to any history that contains miracles. This poses a further metaphysical problem for Christianity. Since knowledge of the past is based on the principle of uniformity (that the present is the key to the past), and since there are no miracles in the present, it is argued that we cannot posit miracles in the past. Miracles are eliminated by historical methodology.

Some Christian thinkers respond by noting that other unusual and singular events occur in the present, so there is no reason that such anomalies could not have happened in the past. However, this will not suffice in itself to prove that miracles can occur in the present. All a singular and unusual event in the present shows by analogy with the past is that a singular and unusual event can occur in the past. It does not prove that miracles could have occurred in the past. From the unusual, one can argue only the unusual, not the supernatural. The only way to show that an event was supernatural is to show that there is a Supernatural Being (God) and that there are certain characteristics of a historical event (like Jesus's resurrection) that show it to be supernatural. And, as stated above, history alone cannot demonstrate the existence of a supernatural realm. Therefore, historical apologetics alone (without giving reason to posit a supernatural Being [God]) cannot be used to demonstrate the truth of the Christian worldview. More is needed (see part 3).

The Appeal to Present Evidence in Nature

Evidence is by no means limited to the past, to history. Apologists often appeal to evidence available in the present. This appeal is twofold. The first is the appeal to what we may call internal evidence of religious experience. (This was discussed and found wanting in chap. 4.) Religious experiences alone are insufficient to establish a theistic worldview, let alone a Christian theistic worldview.

Second, the appeal to the origin or nature of the universe does not do the job either. At best (see part 3), the temporality, contingency, or order of the universe as a whole shows only that there is a theistic God beyond it (see chap. 15); it does not thereby demonstrate the truth of Christianity. More is needed to do this (see part 3). So, as a test for the truth of the Christian worldview, the appeal to external evidence in the universe fails. Likewise, the appeal to internal evidence such as the moral law (which implies a Moral Law Giver) at best only supports belief in a moral law giver, not in the Triune God of Christianity, or the deity of Christ, or the authority of the Christian Scriptures.

Appeal to Future Evidence: John Hick's (1904–89) Eschatological Verification

Some thinkers have appealed to the future as a source of evidence for the possible truth of Christianity. This is called eschatological verification.[128] John Hick argued that it is meaningful to speak about the truth of one's religious beliefs since they can be verified in the future after we die. For example, if we survive death and meet God (whatever that may entail), then it is a verifiable proposition to claim that this is true.

The minimum demand of linguistical empiricism is that we specify some conditions under which we could know if our religious assertions could be true. That is, religious assertions need not be actually verified to be meaningful, but they must at least be somewhere, somehow, sometime verifiable in order to be meaningful or true. Hick responds to this challenge by suggesting that it is

meaningful to believe in God since God's existence can be verified upon death, if one has an experience of meeting God in a future life.

Hick begins his argument by disavowing a necessary symmetrical relation between verification and falsification. For instance, a person's immortality can be verified if one day she observes her own funeral. But she cannot falsify her nonimmortality without surviving death. Hence, it may be that belief in God is not falsifiable by anything in this world or beyond it. But God's existence is verifiable in principle if we can state the conditions in the next life under which one would recognize that one had met God. And, of course, belief in God would be verified in actual practice if one actually had this experience of meeting God one day. Hick admits that "the alleged future experience of this state cannot, of course, be appealed to as evidence for theism as a present interpretation of our experience, but it does suffice to render the choice between theism and atheism real and not a merely empty or verbal choice."[129]

According to Hick, there are "two possible developments of our experience such that if they occurred in conjunction with one another (whether in this life or in another life to come), they would assure us beyond rational doubt of the reality of God, as conceived in the Christian faith." These are, "first, an experience of the fulfillment of God's purpose for ourselves, and this has been disclosed in the Christian revelation; in conjunction, second, with an experience of communion with God as he has revealed himself in the person of Christ." Hick wards off anticipated criticism as to how one would know God when one met him by appeal to the incarnation of Christ, claiming with Barth that "Jesus Christ is the knowability of God." Further, for Hick, the purpose of life for the Christian is final self-fulfillment and happiness in eternal life. This too would be readily recognized when experienced, Hick says. And the skeptic cannot press any falsification charge on the basis that thousands of years have passed and such a blessed state has not yet arrived, for "no final falsification is possible of the claim that this fulfillment will occur—unless, of course, the prediction contains a specific time clause which, in Christian teaching, it does not."[130]

Hick concludes with the reminder that his purpose is not to seek to establish the fact or truth of a given religion, "but rather to establish that there are such things as religious facts." In particular he wishes to show "that the existence or non-existence of the God of the New Testament is a matter of fact, and claims as such an eventual experiential verification." In brief, even though the eschatological method cannot establish Christian theism now, nevertheless one day it can be verified in the eschaton (the End). Meanwhile, it is at least possible to believe the truth of Christianity.[131]

In response, we note two things. First, it is difficult to see how the whole orthodox Christian system could be verified this way. How, for example, could one verify the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, and his atoning death and physical resurrection by a future experience of immortality and some kind of experience of "meeting God"? There is not enough specificity in a future religious experience to bear the structure of the essential doctrines of the orthodox Christian faith.[132]

Second, even if it were possible to verify all the essential truths of the Christian faith by a future experience of immortality and "seeing God," it could not be used as a test of a Christian worldview in the present. At most, eschatological verification would make present truth claims about Christianity (or another religion) meaningful; it would not make them true. Truth is what corresponds to reality, and as such demands knowing a reality to which truth claims correspond in order to know that they are true. If this reality is in the future, then one cannot know that they are true until that reality arrives. Meanwhile, a belief in them is meaningful, but not yet true from our point of view.

Some Characteristic Tenets of Evidentialism

The above analysis indicates some marked differences among evidential attempts to establish the truth of a worldview. Some appeal to past or historical events (as Dodd, Montgomery, and Habermas); some appeal to present religious experience (following Schleiermacher; see chap. 4, "Schleiermacher's (1768–1834) Experience of Absolute Dependence"); others appeal to the evidence for God in the external world of nature (as Thomas Aquinas, William Paley, or Bishop Butler). And still others (e.g., Hick) call on the evidence of experiencing God in the future for a verification of religious claims. Since this chapter is focusing on the appeal to events in the past—namely, historical verification—our evaluation will be limited to it.

Some Positive Characteristics of Historical Verification

Among the valuable contributions of historical apologetics are the following. First, contrary to the postmodern subjectivists, objective history is knowable. Indeed, it is self-defeating to deny it, for the assertion that all history is subjective is itself offered as an objective statement about the past. One cannot know "not-that" without knowing "that."

Second, while only an absolute Mind can have absolute knowledge, nonetheless we can have objective and adequate (though revisable) knowledge about the past. History is like a forensic science, which has indirect knowledge of the past based on analogies in the present.

Third, selectivity and partial evidence do not negate objective knowledge about the past any more than they negate the objectivity of the sciences of archaeology and paleontology.

Negative Evaluation of Historical Apologetics

First, since history is a human interpretation of past events, and since all facts must be interpreted in order to form a history, and since all facts must be understood in the light of an overarching model (worldview), it follows that no fact in and of itself (apart from its overall worldview model) can be used to determine a worldview—no matter how rare or important the fact may be. All facts are interpra-facts, and it is a vicious circle to claim that the fact (no matter how rare) determines the worldview when it is the worldview that determines the meaning of the fact.

Facts and events have ultimate meaning only within and by virtue of the context of the worldview in which they are conceived. Hence, it is a vicious circle to argue that a given fact (say, the resuscitation of Jesus's body) is evidence of a certain truth claim (say, Jesus's claim to be God), unless it can be established that the event comes in the context of a theistic universe.[133]

It makes no sense to claim to be the Son of God and to evidence it by an act of God (miracle) unless there is a God who can have a Son and who can act in a special way in the natural world. But in this case, the mere fact of the resurrection cannot be used to establish the truth that there is a God, for the resurrection cannot even be a miracle unless there already is a God. Many overzealous and hasty Christian apologists rush into their historical and evidential apologetics without first properly doing their theistic homework.

Second, there is more than one way to interpret facts—even facts like the resuscitation of Jesus's corpse (if it occurred). Indeed, there are three major worldviews by which a resuscitation event can be interpreted. It can be understood within the naturalistic worldview as an anomaly. Within a pantheistic worldview, it is merely a manifestation of a God who is immanent in the world (but not

transcendent over it). Or, in a theistic world, God is beyond the world and can intervene in it in a supernatural way. But there cannot be a supernatural intervention (miracle) within the world in either a naturalistic or pantheistic worldview since there is no supernatural realm beyond the world in which to intervene.

An "r" (resuscitation) event in a given world takes on the interpretive framework of the worldview by which it is interpreted. Facts have no meaning apart from their interpretive framework since there are no naked facts, only interpra-facts. So an "r" event in a naturalistic world is an N "r" event. In a pantheist world, it is a P "r" event. Only in a theistic world is it a T "r" event. Worldviews are like a set of colored glasses. The world will be seen differently through differently colored glasses.

Third, a miracle in the past is ruled out by the historical method unless one has an independent way to establish that God exists apart from the historical events as such, for the historical method is based on the principle of uniformity (the present is the key to the past), and there are no miracles in the present on which to base the analogy. Further, to argue that there are miracles in the present begs the question by assuming that there is a God who can so act in the world in order to prove there is a God by a miraculous act in the past. The only way to avoid this conclusion is to show by an independent argument that the whole world is created by a God beyond the world (see part 3), who made the world and can intervene in the world. History alone cannot do this as history gets its meaning from the worldview through which it is interpreted.

Fourth, there is no way from pure facts themselves to single out some facts as having special, crucial, or ultimate significance. "Singling out," "selecting," "comparing," and the like are processes of the mind based on principles or perspectives one brings to the facts and not characteristics inherent in raw data. Events simply occur in a series; only one's perspective or view of those events can determine which one is to be honored over another with special significance. Not even unusual or odd events have, as such, inherently more significance than usual or common ones. If that were so, anomalies would be more important than scientific laws, and more human significance would be attributed to freaks than to normal people. In the context of a random universe, even series of odd events bear no more significance than unloaded dice that roll the same numbers on several successive throws.

Of course, in the context of a designed or theistic universe (known from other sources), a series of unusual events, such as the point-by-point correspondence of the life of Christ with a significant number of predictions made hundreds of years in advance, would be an entirely different matter, for if there is a God who can make a series of predictions of unusual events that come to pass as foretold, surely it is not unreasonable to consider them miraculous. But to return to the point, whether there is a God is precisely the point at issue. And it is invalid to appeal to "theistic evidence"—that is, to allegedly miraculous events—as a proof that this is a theistic world. That begs the whole question. If this is a theistic universe, of course certain odd series of events can be given special significance. However, the significance does not reside in the events as such, but is attributed to them by virtue of the important overall context in which they occur—namely, the theistic context. But if this is a random natural world rather than a theistic world, neither the life of Christ nor any other unusual series of events has any more special religious significance than an odd series of combinations on a Las Vegas gambling table.

The real problem for the Christian apologist is to find some way apart from the mere facts themselves to establish the justifiability of interpreting facts in a theistic way. No appeal to the mere events or facts themselves will aid in determining which of the alternative interpretations should be based on the facts. Viewpoints and worldviews come from without and not from within the facts.

Hence, facts or events as such cannot establish theism. The selection, relation, and relative weight given the facts are not inherent to the facts themselves.

Summary and Conclusion

Historical evidentialism can yield objective knowledge about the past. However, no event in history can be used to interpret all of history including itself without avoiding a vicious circle. Further, an event in history, including a resuscitation event, cannot be known to be a miracle from the historical event itself, no matter how unusual it is. The odd never proves God. All facts in history are interpreted by the overall worldview in which they are understood. Hence, no facts "speak for themselves." All facts are interpra-facts. No fact can determine the worldview framework that in turn gives meaning to the fact. This is a vicious circle. Therefore, a worldview by which one interprets the fact of history cannot emerge from history itself. In short, history alone cannot be used to interpret the meaning of history or historical facts, and historical apologetics cannot be used to establish the Christian worldview.

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6
Pragmatism

Pragmatists contend that one does not *think* or even *feel* truth, but can discover it by attempting to *live* it. Truth is not what is *consistent* or what is empirically *adequate* but what is experientially *workable*. Did not even Jesus say that "by their fruits you shall know them"? Although Christian apologists of the pragmatic variety are not abundant, a pragmatic test for truth is by no means nonexistent. Indeed, sophisticated philosophical systems have been built on a pragmatic theory of meaning and/or truth.

An Examination of the Pragmatic Approach to Meaning and Truth

Kant used the word *pragmatic* to mean a "contingent belief, which yet forms the ground for the actual employment of means to certain actions."[134] But the thought of developing Kant's use of *pragmatic* into a theory of meaning or test for truth was not German but American in origin.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914): Pragmatic Theory of Meaning

Properly speaking, Charles Sanders Peirce did not offer pragmatism as a test for truth but as a theory of meaning. He was not concerned with theory verification as such but with clarification of thought.

The Four Methods of Belief. After dismissing Francis Bacon's approach to science as cavalier and Descartes's starting point in doubt as difficult if not impossible to attain, Peirce suggests that beliefs may be fixed in a much better way. First, our problem would be greatly simplified if, instead of speaking of "truth," one would/could attain belief unassailable by doubt—namely, a state of confidence. The process of attaining this he calls "The Fixation of Belief." Peirce declares that there are only four methods of stabilizing one's belief:

(1) The method of *tenacity* is evident when "a man may go through life, systematically keeping out of view all that might cause a change in his opinions." Despite the satisfaction and peace of mind this method may bring to the individual, it "will be unable to hold its ground in practice. The social impulse is against it. The man who adopts it will find that other men think differently from him."[135] It would work only for a hermit and is ineffective for a community.

(2) The method of *authority* is backing one's belief by social convention, by creating a priesthood or aristocracy to pontificate. Although Peirce granted this method "immeasurable mental and moral superiority to the method of tenacity," he considered it unfeasible, for "no institution can undertake to regulate opinions upon every subject."[136] Some minor freedoms must be allowed, and these will always be the breeding grounds for major dissent.

(3) The a priori method of fixing beliefs is one that is "agreeable to reason." This method "is far more intellectual and respectable from the point of view of reason than either of the others which we

have noticed," Peirce wrote. However, "its failure has been the most manifest. It makes of inquiry something similar to the development of taste." The unshakable views of today are tomorrow out of fashion.[137]

(4) Only the method of *science* is sufficient for fixing beliefs. The fundamental premise behind this method is that "there are real things, whose . . . realities affect our senses according to regular laws . . . yet, by taking advantage of the laws of perception, we can ascertain how things really are." Furthermore, "any man, if he has sufficient experience and reason enough about it, will be led to the one true conclusion."[138]

The evidence Peirce offers for this is fourfold. First, even if investigation cannot prove this thesis, "no doubts of the method . . . necessarily arise from its practice, as is the case with all the others." Second, "nobody . . . can really doubt that there are realities, for, if he did, doubt would not be a source of dissatisfaction," for doubt always results from the repugnance of two propositions that presuppose the reality of "some one thing to which a proposition should conform." Third, "everybody uses the scientific method about a great many things, and only ceases to use it when he does not know how to apply it." Fourth, "experience of the method has not led us to doubt it, but, on the contrary, scientific investigation has had the most wonderful triumphs in the way of settling opinion." Hence, "this is the only one of the four methods which presents any distinction of a right and wrong way. If I adopt the method of tenacity, and shut myself out from all influences, whatever I think necessary to doing this, is necessary according to that method." Likewise, "with the method of authority . . . the only test *on that method* is what the state thinks; so it cannot pursue the method wrongly. So with the *a priori* method. The very essence of it is to think as one is inclined to think." And on this ground, of course, one can never be wrong. "But with the scientific method the case is different," Peirce concludes. "The test of whether I am truly following the method is not an immediate appeal to my feelings and purposes, but, on the contrary, itself involves the application of the method." In this way the person who confesses that there is such a thing as truth as versus falsity simply says this: "If acted on it [the scientific method] will carry us to the point we aim at and not astray."[139]

The Pragmatic Clarification of Ideas. From the principles set forth in the foregoing scientific or pragmatic method, Peirce believes he has reached "a clearness of thought of a far higher grade than the 'distinctness' of the logicians," for "the essence of belief is the establishment of a habit, and different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise." If beliefs do not differ in this practical way, then "no mere differences in the manner of consciousness of them can make them different beliefs, any more than playing a tune in different keys is playing different tunes." In short, the final rule for attaining "clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." Or, in other words, the meaning of anything is to be found in its practical results. The final differential is a pragmatic one. A mere difference in mode of conception is not a clear and distinct difference. But a practical difference in experienced results is a clearly distinct difference.[140]

The components of a belief, then, are three: First, it is something of which we are aware. Second, it satisfies the irritation caused by doubt. And finally, it involves the establishment in our nature of a rule of action or a *habit*. Thus Peirce wrote elsewhere, "Belief is not a momentary mode of consciousness, it is a habit of mind essentially enduring for some time, and mostly (at least) unconscious."[141] So the essence of belief is the establishment of a habit, and different beliefs are distinguished by different modes of action to which they give rise.

The Concept of God Clarified. Peirce held that any normal human would come naturally to act as if there were a God. This would simply be the pragmatic clarification of an implicit belief that the person possessed. It would be an overt action that demonstratively clarified that covert belief.[142] In another place Peirce said, "So, then, the question being whether I believe in the reality of God, I answer, Yes. I further opine that pretty nearly everybody more or less believes this, including many of the scientific men of my generation who are accustomed to think that belief is entirely unfounded." And "if a pragmaticist is asked what he means by the word 'God,' he can only say that just as long acquaintance with a man of great character may deeply influence one's whole manner of conduct, so that a glance at his portrait may make a difference . . . then that analogue of a mind—for it is impossible to say that *any* human attribute is *literally* applicable—is what he means by 'God.'" However, our knowledge of God is more than purely negative, "because the discoveries of science, their enabling us to *predict* what will be the course of nature, is proof conclusive that, though we cannot think any thought of God's, we can catch a fragment of His Thought, as it were [in nature]."[143]

As to whether there really is such a being as God, "the only guide to the answer to this question lies in the power of the passion of love which more or less overmasters every agnostic scientist and everybody who seriously and deeply considers the universe." Peirce adds, "But whatever there may be of argument in all this is as nothing, the merest nothing in comparison to its force as an appeal to one's own instinct, which is to argument what substance is to shadow, what bedrock is to the built foundation of a cathedral." The idea of God comes, then, from direct experience. "As to God, open your eyes—and your heart, which is also a perceptive organ—and you see him." Of course, delusions are possible. "I may think a thing is black, and on close examination it may turn out to be bottle-green. But I cannot think a thing is black if there is no such thing to be seen as black." Likewise, one cannot be totally deceived as to the reality of God, however wrong one may be about God's precise nature.[144]

William James (1842–1910): The Pragmatic Test for Truth

William James's first major venture into religious writing was one of descriptive psychology. His description is classic, and it sets the stage for his pragmatism.

A Description of Religious Experience. On examining religion on the experiential level, James concluded there are two types of persons: the "once-born" and the "twice-born." The former is optimistic in outlook, the latter pessimistic. The one maximizes good, and the other evil. The first type is healthy-minded, and the second is sick-souled. The once-born are born with a sense of harmony, but the twice-born have inner discord naturally. For the former, happiness is the evidence of God; for the latter, unhappiness manifests man's need for the Divine. In the case of once-born humans there is a continuity with God. At worst a person is only maladjusted and is naturally curable. But in the case of the twice-born there is discontinuity with God based on a sense of humanity's essential evil, which calls for supernatural help. According to James, the Latins tend to be of the once-born type, and the Germanic peoples tend to be of the twice-born type. In terms of conceptualization, the first group tend to be pantheistic, and the second theistic. Emerson and Whitman illustrate the former, while Luther and Bunyan are examples of the latter.[145]

James described the characteristics of two types of conversion: gradual and sudden. Both are characterized by (1) a change in the habitual center of personal energy (i.e., self-surrender) and (2) the undermining and replacement of one life system by another. This change generally occurs in adolescence, but it takes about one-fifth the time in conversion. The symptoms of this experience are a

sense of incompleteness followed by anxiety about the hereafter that leads to a sense of happy relief on conversion. The sudden conversions are characterized by (1) a period of subconscious incubation from sublimation, followed by (2) an uprush from the subconscious called automation. (3) The larger the subconscious storehouse of sublimation, the more likely there will be a sudden conversion as opposed to a gradual one. (4) But there are no psychologically discernible differences between a natural conversion and an alleged "supernatural one" as described by Jonathan Edwards in his famous *Treatise concerning the Religious Affections*. James does not deny the working of God in conversion but leaves the door open through the subconscious as the route of divine activity.[146]

The common core of all religious experience, according to James, involves both the subjective and the objective. The subjective or emotional side involves (1) a feeling that the visible world draws its chief significance from the wider spiritual universe, (2) a sense that union or harmonious relation with the higher universe is our true end, and (3) a feeling that prayer or inner communion with the spirit of this higher universe produces effects within the phenomenal world. The effects of these three beliefs provide (4) a new zest for life manifest in lyrical enchantment or an appeal to earnestness and heroism, and (5) an assurance of safety and a temper of peace in oneself and of love toward others.

On the objective or intellectual side of the religious experience are two factors: (1) a sense that something has gone wrong with the way we are naturally, and (2) a belief that we are saved from this wrongness by making proper connection with higher powers. This is the minimal cognitive content in all religious experience.[147]

James held that there were two sides of the religious experience: the "hither" and the "thither." The "hither" side may be identified with the subconscious continuation of our conscious self. That is, what one means by "God" is, on the psychologically describable side, said to be found in the area of one's individual subconsciousness. What the "thither" or "higher" side may be is not subject to direct scientific investigation. It is a matter of "over-belief." However, James believes that one can posit a hypothesis about this "more" or "God" that can be practically tested.[148]

The Will to Believe. Even before James put together his classic analysis of religious experience (1902), he had already written on how to justify a religious belief in his famous essay "The Will to Believe" (1896). He argued that one's will to believe can be founded on very personal and practical bases. A hypothesis, James wrote, is "anything that may be proposed to our belief." As such it may be either living or dead. "A live hypothesis is one which appeals as a real possibility to him to whom it is proposed," and "the maximum of liveness in a hypothesis means willingness to act irrevocably." Further, James writes, "Let us call the decision between two hypotheses an *option*." Options may be "first, *living* or *dead*; secondly, *forced* or *avoidable*; thirdly, *momentous* or *trivial*. And for our purposes we may call an option a *genuine* option when it is of the forced, living, and momentous kind." A live option is one in which each alternative "makes some appeal, however small, to your belief." A forced option is one "based on a complete disjunction, with no possibility of not choosing." Finally, a momentous option is a unique opportunity as versus a trivial one, in which "the stakes are insignificant, or when the decision is reversible." Science abounds with trivial options. Needless to say, religion for James is a genuine option—that is, one that is forced, living, and momentous.[149]

James believed that "our passional and volitional nature lay at the root of all our convictions." Free will is not a "fifth wheel to the coach." Even as scientists "we want to have truth; we want to believe that our experiments and studies and discussions must put us in a continually better and better position towards it." And "as a rule we disbelieve all facts and theories for which we have no use." Hence, James concludes that "*our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an*

option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot be decided on intellectual grounds." "To say, under such circumstances, 'Do not decide, but leave the question open,' is itself a passional decision—just like deciding yes or no—and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth." James believed there was no way to settle the religious question on purely intellectual grounds. "Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with," he continues, "but where on this moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found?" Indeed, "no concrete test of what is really true has ever been agreed upon." For "what a contradictory array of opinions have objective evidence and absolute certitude been claimed!"[150]

Of course, "whenever the option between losing truth and gaining it is not momentous, we can throw the chance of *gaining truth* away, and at any rate save ourselves from any chance of *believing falsehood*, by not making up our minds at all till objective evidence has come." In scientific matters such skepticism in the absence of evidence is almost always called for. However, religious and "*moral questions* immediately present themselves as questions whose solution cannot wait for a sensible proof." Of course, "the question of having moral beliefs at all or not having them is decided by our will," for "if your heart does not *want* a world of moral reality, your head will assuredly never make you believe in one." Moral skepticism can be no more refuted or proved by logic than can intellectual skepticism. And the religious skeptic says, "*Better risk loss of truth than chance of error*." When in the presence of a religious option, the religious skeptic always believes that "fear of its being error is wiser and better than to yield to our hope that it may be true."[151]

James, however, responded to the skeptic by saying, "I do not wish, by putting your extinguisher upon my nature . . . to forfeit my sole chance in life of getting upon the winning side." Religion is a genuine option that says "the best things are the more eternal things" and "we are better off even now if we believe her first affirmation to be true." This means that religion is both a living option (to all who are tempted to believe it) and a momentous option in view of the unique opportunity for betterment it offers. Likewise, religion is a forced option because "we cannot escape the issue by remaining skeptical and waiting for more light, because although we do avoid error in that way *if religion be untrue*, we lose the good, *if it be true*, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve." Hence, "we have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will." And "any rule of thinking which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule," for "there are, then, cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming. And where faith in a fact can help create the fact, that would be an insane logic which should say that faith running ahead of scientific evidence is the 'lowest kind of immorality' into which the thinking being can fall." But "since belief is measured by action, he who forbids us to believe religion to be true, necessarily also forbids us to act as we should if we did believe it to be true. The whole defense of religious faith hinges upon action."[152] Thus James believed that faith in God did make a person different from another who believed only a naturalistic hypothesis. And some years later in his classic on religious experience, James offered the evidence for his belief that religion does make a difference.

The Value and Fruit of Religion in One's Life. Religion is not to be judged by its source or root but by its result or fruit. Both the inner and outer characteristics of "saintliness" are superior. Internally, the religious person gains (1) a satisfying feeling of being in a life that is wider (Ideal) than a life governed by this world's selfish interests, (2) a sense of friendly continuity between oneself and this ideal Power, (3) an immense sense of freedom and elation as our confining self melts down, and (4) a shifting of our emotional center toward love and harmony with the other. Externally, religion

manifests itself in (1) asceticism, in which self-surrender becomes self-sacrifice, (2) strength of soul by enlargement to new reaches of patience and fortitude, (3) purity or a spiritual sensitizing that results from a shift of our emotional center, and (4) charity, in which the same shift brings increased tenderness to our fellow creatures.[153] In summary James wrote, "In a general way, then, and 'on the whole,' . . . our testing of religion by practical common sense and the empirical method, leave it in possession of its towering place in history." "Economically, the saintly group of qualities is indispensable to the world's welfare. The great saints are immediate successes; the smaller ones are at least heralds and harbingers, and they may be leavens also, of a better mundane order. Let us be saints, then, if we can."[154]

The Pragmatic Test for Truth. James's pragmatism is implicit in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) when he says that "over-beliefs" cannot be scientifically proved but that the pragmatic and experiential grounds of religious belief are so plausible that "scientific logic will find no plausible pretext for vetoing your impulse to welcome it as true." This "thoroughly pragmatic view of religion," James says, "has usually been taken as a matter of course by common men," but "I believe the pragmatic way of taking religion to be the deeper way."[155]

Several years later, James explicated his pragmatic method very clearly in his work *Pragmatism* (1907). "True ideas," he wrote, "are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we can not." Ideas are not intrinsically true or false. Rather, "truth happens to an idea." Ideas are made true by events. On the commonsense level truth is "a leading that is worth while." To borrow a banking analogy, "truth lives on a credit system." Ideas pass along until someone wants to "cash in" on them. Truth, then, is the "cash-value" of an idea. "We trade on each other's truth. But beliefs verified concretely by *somebody* are the posts of the whole superstructure." Verification, then, may be direct or indirect, but eventually "all true processes must lead to the face of directly verifying sensible experiences *somewhere*, which *somebody's* ideas have copied." The true, to put it very briefly, "is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the 'right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving."[156] Pragmatism's "only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best. . . . If theological ideas should do this, if the notion of God, in particular, should prove to do it, how could pragmatism possibly deny God's existence?"[157]

The pragmatic method yielded for James a pluralistic rather than a monistic universe, one that was melioristic rather than either optimistically considering salvation inevitable or pessimistically resigned to ultimate doom. But traditional theism is ruled out for a "pragmatic or melioristic type of theism," which involves a superhuman but finite God. In the final analysis, however, "pragmatism has to postpone dogmatic answer, for we do not yet know certainly which type of religion is going to work best in the long run."[158]

Pragmatic Elements in Evangelical Apologetics

Pragmatic elements have been present in orthodox apologetics for some time. Jesus's statement, "by their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. 7:20), has long been taken to be a pragmatic test for the truth about a religious teaching. Even Thomas Aquinas spoke of believing "what another says because it seems fitting or useful to do so. Thus, too, we are moved to believe what God says because we are promised eternal life as a reward if we believe."[159] The emphasis among Christians that "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" is found extensively on the popular level. Along with other "evidence," Josh McDowell has a testimonial chapter (12) in his famous book *Evidence That*

Demands a Verdict. Concerning the fifty-seven conversions he lists, he comments: "Multiply these testimonies by the hundreds of thousands and you will begin to approach something like the impact Christ has had on the world in the past 2,000 years. Is the Christian experience valid? These and millions more believe so, and have lives to back up their statement."[160] In short, Christianity must be true because it works—on all kinds of people in all kinds of situations.

Few contemporary Christians, however, have given more thoughtful and philosophical backing to a kind of pragmatic test for truth than has Francis Schaeffer. In a chapter titled "How Do We Know It Is True?" Schaeffer outlines his test for truth as follows: "The theory must be non-contradictory and must give an answer to the phenomenon in question," and, second, "*we must be able to live consistently with our theory*" (emphasis added). Schaeffer admits that a non-Christian view such as materialism may fit the second, "for man simply cannot live as though he were a machine." The Christian view of the universe, however, "can be lived with, both in life and in scholarly pursuits." And "it should be added in conclusion that the Christian, after he is a Christian, has years of experimental evidence to add to all the above reasons." Thus crucial to the falsity of the non-Christian view is its unlivability, while the truth of Christianity is confirmed by its livability and experiential verification.[161]

Schaeffer illustrates his point by what he thinks of as a kind of broad experiential teleological argument.[162] He notes that no one can really live a chance philosophy of pure materialism. Schaeffer references Jackson Pollock, who dipped paint on his canvas by chance but ultimately exhausted his method, and died at an early age. The American musician John Cage, who flipped coins to determine notes, took up hunting mushrooms as a hobby. He confessed, "I became aware that if I approached mushrooms in the spirit of my chance operations, I would die shortly. So I decided that I would not approach them in this way!"[163] Pollock is dead because he tried in vain to live his chance philosophy. Cage lived on because he was inconsistent with his random view of the universe. Both proved that dysteleology (anti-design) is unlivable. Therefore, to live consistently, one must believe that this universe is a designed and personal one (i.e., a theistic one). Of course Schaeffer gives much more elaboration and sophistication to his position, but the broad pragmatic emphasis is there nonetheless. Only the Christian view is consistent and livable, and all non-Christian views are in the final analysis unlivable. Experience confirms this to be true.[164]

Some Common Characteristics of the Pragmatic Test for Truth

Pragmatists, like rationalists or empiricists, differ in the outcome or result of their test for truth. Some are theists while others are not. But whatever the difference in conclusion, there is a central agreement on the nature of the pragmatic test itself. These common tenets may be briefly summarized now.

1. The testing ground of a theory of truth is human experience. Is the position *livable*? Does it work in the lives of humans for whom it is proposed? What is its cash value in human experience? There is a difference as to the source and nature of the *theory* of truth among pragmatists—some get truths from sense experience and others from divine revelation—but the *test* is the same; namely, what are the fruits of this theory in the lives of persons? As a test for truth, then, pragmatism is decidedly experiential.

2. Pragmatism as proposed by William James is characterized by other things such as *futurity*. That is, it is not present and individual experience that will decide the truth of a hypothesis but general, continual, and long-run experience. Over the long haul our experiences will determine the truth of a

religious hypothesis. Truth may have tentative confirmation in the present, but it is subject to revision and disconfirmation by our experiences in the distant future. The next point follows directly from this.

3. Another characteristic is *relativity.* Pragmatism disavows absolute results of its test. All conclusions about truth are less than absolute and final. Knowledge is always progressive. Some views may be more widely confirmed than others, but none are really universally and finally settled.

Philosophical pragmatism has other characteristics, such as its distaste for or denial of essential truth, its progressivism, and its instrumentalism, but the foregoing are at the heart of its test for truth. And this latter point is our only concern here.

An Evaluation of the Pragmatic Test for Truth

There is undoubtedly a pragmatic strain in all humans. Both the need for and the appeal of results in human operations add to the attractiveness of the pragmatic theory. Emerging from this are several commendable features of the pragmatic emphasis.

Positive Contributions of Pragmatism

What pragmatism offers is more lively than the effects of rationalism. It brings one back from the ivory tower of the abstract possibilities to the concrete realities of life. In this regard we may note several contributions to the quest for truth.

1. Pragmatism provides a balance in its reaction against the purely formal and rationalistic approach. It stresses the practical vis-à-vis the purely theoretical. It is not content with seeking causes but is also concerned with producing effects in lives. It does not judge an idea solely on its root but considers also its fruit. Pragmatism rightly stresses that contemplation is not always sufficient; action is sometimes necessary. It points out that truth does not abide merely in the abstract but has concrete applications as well.

2. Truth, at least religious truth, is finally confirmed in personal experience. Any theory that offers itself as a world and *life* view must be applicable to life. Human experience is the proving ground where many beautiful theories have been ruined by brutal gangs of facts. If a view is actually unlivable, how can it be considered a true perspective on life? Certainly religious truth, with its life-transforming claim, must be applicable to life or else must be disqualified as a claimant of truth.

3. Pragmatists also provide a helpful reminder of the tentative or probable nature of much of our knowledge. Few, if any, truths about reality can be known with rational inescapability. And certainly many truths about the world of our experiences are held on less than absolute grounds. Finite humans must be content with the limits of their finitude. Even if there are absolute truths, humans do not have an absolute grasp on them. And even if there is an Infinite Being, limited humans have far less than an infinite understanding of him. Pragmatists serve as a corrective to dogmatists and remind the Christian that "now we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12 KJV).

4. Finally, pragmatists, like existentialists, remind us again of the role of the personal and volitional in truth. The process of understanding and applying spiritual truths to one's life is more than purely rational. There must be a will to believe. The "horse" can be led to the water, but it cannot be made to drink—not, at least, by purely rational arguments. Even if one could prove rationally *that* God exists, it does not follow that one must believe *in* God. A young man may know *that* there are many wonderful young women who would make excellent wives but at the same time he may not

desire to place his trust *in* any of them. Similarly, faith is essential to religious experience. Without an ultimate commitment to the Ultimate, to borrow Paul Tillich's terms, there will be no ultimate or religious satisfaction.[165]

Some Criticisms of the Pragmatic Theory of Truth

Despite the many commendable features of pragmatism, as a *test* for the truth of a worldview it is clearly insufficient. When it is weighed on the methodological scales, it is found wanting. Many have undertaken to criticize pragmatism from many perspectives. We will summarize here only those observations that apply to pragmatism as a test for truth.

1. The results or consequences of an action do not establish what is true but simply what happened to *work*. But success is not truth and failure is not necessarily falsity. Even when given or desired results are attained, one can still ask of the view or action, "Was it true?" The truth question is not settled but is still open after the results are reached. Pragmatism shows what works (and one would expect truth to work), but it does not prove that what worked is true.

2. Truth may be unrelated to results. The results may have been accidental, in which case the results would no more prove a truth than accidentally discovering a million dollars proves one is the rightful owner of it. And even if the results are not accidental but follow regularly from a given belief or action, such results do not prove that that belief is true. Unlawful entry by picking a lock will work regularly, but that result does not demonstrate that this was either a right way to enter or that entry was the right result. Further, sometimes truth may not bring the desired results (e.g., being honest on one's tax returns may be economically painful). And sometimes the desired result may not be true (e.g., achieving desired economic gain by oppressing the poor). Neither the desired nor the desirable is necessarily the truthful.

3. Truth is more than the expedient, as some pragmatists put it. As Josiah Royce once stated, one wonders whether his Harvard colleague William James would be satisfied to put a witness on the stand in court and have him swear to tell "the expedient, the whole expedient, and nothing but the expedient, so help him future experience."[166] At the heart of this criticism is the contention that we do mean more by truth than what works. The meaning of truth cannot be limited to the functional and practical. And if it were, we would have to determine whether it means what is meaningful for the individual or what is meaningful for the race. If the former, solipsism would follow—that is, truth would be entirely relative to the individual, to what is expedient for the individual at that moment. And if truth is what is meaningful to most humans in the long run, then other problems emerge, to which we now turn.

4. Pragmatists admit that it is impossible for us to know the long-run consequences. Further, pantheism has seemingly worked well for vast masses of humans for centuries of time. And were William James alive today, he would witness even more Westerners adopting pantheistic views. Does the latter fact confirm the real truth of pantheism or merely show that more people are trying it and finding that it works for them? Maybe, as fads go, there will be a great reversal in the long run. What then? How is one to know *now* which view is ultimately true—that is, will work best in the long run? Must one rely solely on the will to believe? On purely pragmatic grounds there appears to be no other alternative for a finite person who cannot divine the distant future.

5. A passionate and volitional basis alone for deciding truth is insufficient. It is subject to the same critiques leveled against fideism (see chap. 3). Faith is certainly necessary for belief in God, but one must have some evidence or reason to believe *that* there is a God before reasonably believing *in*

God. But if pragmatists are unable to decide the momentous religious issue of whether there is a God on intellectual grounds, then they must rely on purely passional bases. And in this case there is really no objective or public test for truth at all. A purely personal and private test for truth cannot meet even the minimal standards for truth criteria, for it is neither available to others nor able really to exclude other views. In short, at this point, pragmatism reduces to fideism.

6. On purely pragmatic grounds opposing worldviews may work equally well. James admitted that pantheism has worked for millions of people for hundreds of years. If what some pantheist desires is the cessation of all craving, then attaining nirvana (i.e., the extinguishing of all craving) not only will work well, but would also work better than heaven as Christians conceive of it (i.e., as a continual fulfilling of all desires forever). Heaven would perpetually frustrate one who does not want to experience unfulfilled desire anymore. Likewise, nirvana would not fulfill Christian desire but extinguish even the ability to desire. So, on a purely pragmatic ground, one would have to say that nirvana works best for pantheists and heaven works best for Christians. But pantheism and Christianity are opposing worldviews; both cannot be true at the same time and in the same sense.[167] Hence, the only alternative for adjudication of these conflicting truth claims is to contend that one view has (or both have) the *wrong* goal. But on a purely pragmatic basis there is no way to affirm this, since according to pragmatism truth and rightness are known only from attaining desired consequences. And we have already seen that the consequences are best for each view in accord with its own goals but not in accord with those of the other. The pragmatic test for truth cannot rescue us from total relativism in this regard.

Summary and Conclusion

There is a difference between a pragmatic *theory* of truth and a pragmatic *test* for truth. Christian apologists disavow the former but often employ the latter as one of their tests, if not the only test, for the truth of Christianity. There are indeed some important insights provided by pragmatists that are not foreign to biblical Christianity. Truth must work in one's life, faith in God is essential, by their fruits you shall know them, and so on. All of these are good. Of course, all truth must work, but not everything that works is necessarily true. However, it is both an ill-advised and a fatal apologetic move to employ pragmatism as a total test for truth or as the test of a total worldview, because such a test reduces to relativism, fideism, or experientialism—all of which are inadequate to establish the truth of Christianity vis-à-vis other worldviews. Many differing views work for many different people. But results are often unrelated to truth. Further, who can know what the long-run consequences or results of belief will be? How can a person believe *in* God on a purely passional basis without evidence to support a belief *that* God is there? The Christian apologist believes that truth will work in the long run, but cannot hold that what works is true, for many false and evil things have worked for many people for many years. And no finite person can see the distant future. Hence, pragmatism fails as a sufficient test for truth in the present.

Select Readings for Chapter 6

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7
Combinationalism

The failure of the foregoing tests for the truth of a worldview, tests such as experientialism, rationalism, evidentialism, and pragmatism (in chaps. 1–6), leave open the door for another methodology, such as is offered in the combinational approach, often called systematic consistency. This method rejects all the previous methods and offers a combination of many of them in a single model, which often includes consistency, coherence, factual adequacy, and/or existential relevance. An examination of several important examples will indicate just how combinationalists employ their tests.

An Exposition of Several Major Presuppositional Methodologies

Combinationalists combine tests from several epistemological methods. And although there is no necessary logical connection between their test for truth and their supposed source of truth, nonetheless, there is sometimes a carryover from one to the other. For instance, Ian Ramsey's empirical background carries over into his emphasis on empirical fit as a test for truth.[168] The important thing, however, is that whatever the epistemological source of truth, each combinationalist feels that a combination of tests for truth is necessary to establish the truth of a worldview.

The Test of Religious Models: Ian Ramsey (1915–72) and Frederick Ferré (1933–)

As was evident in the analysis of evidentialism (see chap. 5), experience or facts alone are not self-interpreting; a framework of interpretation is necessary for meaning. Bare facts bear no meaning. Only when facts are placed in a meaningful framework or model do they convey more than mere facticity. C. H. Dodd acknowledged that history, for example, was fact *plus* meaning. And for him it was the Christian myth or model that provided the framework to make meaning of history.

The Qualified Disclosure Models of Ian Ramsey. Ramsey approaches the problem from an empirical rather than from a historical direction. First, he seeks to clarify what a religious experience is. It is a discernment-commitment situation. A discernment situation is an ordinary empirical experience that suddenly "comes alive" when the "ice breaks" or the "light dawns." For example, "eye meets eye" when a judge suddenly recognizes that the criminal he is sentencing is his long-lost lover! A commitment situation is one that calls for a response, a total response. It is like Kant's "duty for duty's sake" or a patriot's "my country, right or wrong." There are some partial commitments to the whole of the universe (as mathematics), and there are some total commitments to part of the universe (as a hobby), but a religious response of commitment is a total commitment to the whole universe.[169] It is, as Paul Tillich said, an ultimate commitment to the Ultimate.[170] Hence, a religious

experience is an empirically grounded disclosure experience in which the "more" or "beyond" disclosed therein calls for a complete commitment. It is a disclosure-commitment situation.[171]

Various models and qualifiers can be used to evoke religious disclosure. By "model" Ramsey means a disclosure model, not a picture model, for religious models do not describe God but merely evoke religious insight. For instance, "When we speak of God as supreme love we are not making an assertion in descriptive psychology." Rather, we are simply modifying the model "love" by the qualifier "supreme" so as to evoke religious insight and commitment. And by use of models and qualifiers one can build up "family resemblances." And from the tangential meeting of these many religious models, one can build a religious macromodel—that is, the concept of "God." So the word *God* serves as an integrator term for religious experience in a way similar to the way in which the word *I* serves as an integrator word for all our self-awareness.[172] Not all God concepts or macrometaphors need be the same. Indeed, models can be qualified endlessly, providing new insights and evoking further responses. But models do help us to be reliably articulate in theology.

Furthermore, the adequacy of one's model for God can be tested by what Ramsey calls its "empirical fit." That is, (1) "in all cases the models must chime in with the phenomena; they must arise in a moment of insight or disclosure," and (2) "a model in theology does not stand or fall with the possibility of verifiable deductions. It is rather judged by its stability over the widest possible range of phenomena, by its ability to incorporate the most diverse phenomena not inconsistently." This God model "works more like the fitting of a boot or a shoe than the 'yes' or 'no' of a roll call." In short, the truth of religious language is empirically anchored and experientially tested. "There must be something about the universe and man's experience in it which, for example, matches the behavior of a loving father."[173] That is, even though there is no strict verification of religious truth, there is an experiential confirmation. And the wider the range of experience that can be consistently incorporated into the model of God, the better is the model. Each additional disclosure, consistently incorporated, makes the model fit more perfectly, in a manner similar to the way in which it is true that the more sides are added to a polygon, the more perfectly it fits into a circle. In sum, the truth of the Christian theistic model is judged by its *empirical fit* over the entire range of human experience.

The Theological Model of Frederick Ferré. Contrary to many religious-language analysts, Ferré claimed that religious language cannot be purely noncognitive. He believed that there are models that can provide cognitivity and truth to religious language. He defines a model as that "which provides epistemological vividness or immediacy to a theory by offering as an interpretation . . . something that both fits the logical form of the theory and is well-known." Models are to be judged by their type, scope, and status. The type is the degree of concreteness—that is, its ability to be "built" of "picture." Scope is a model's degree of inclusiveness—that is, how much reality it purports to represent. And the status of a model indicates how much importance is attributed to it, such as its dispensability or indispensability.[174]

Religious models are characterized by four factors: (1) In contrast to scientific models, religious models do not achieve separation between reality and the observer. (2) Scientific models are only more or less helpful, but religious models cannot be separated from the truth question. (3) Religious models draw on a different set of facts than do scientific models. In theism, the facts are composed of characteristics like personality, will, purpose, and love. And in Christianity, the facts center in the "creative, self-giving, personal love of Jesus Christ." (4) In theology, theories (which tie models with other cognitive areas) change occasionally, but high-level models are quite resistant to change.[175]

The high-level religious model may serve as a metaphysical model—that is, represent the "ultimate character" of the universe. The theistic model is built on imagery taken from Scripture. Christians

justify the ascription of truth to the theistic model by building an all-inclusive system around this model and incorporating data from all other areas of knowledge into its synthesis.

Technically speaking, one cannot test the truth of a theistic model itself but only the truth of the synthesis that results from applying the theistic model to the whole range of human experience. There are really three levels of the total account of things: (1) the proverbial, metaphysical model, or symbol, taken from the imagery of Scripture; (2) the set of propositions that attempt to express this symbol in a cognitive way; and (3) the whole range of functions, cognitive and noncognitive, that make up the religious-language game. Since the third cannot be evaluated directly and the first is precognitive, only the second can be tested for truth. These propositions on the second level do two things: they explicate the primary model and give structure to the totality of the third level.[176]

Ferré offers five tests for the truth of the theistic model: (1) *consistency*, or freedom from contradictions among and with the key statements; (2) *coherence*, or external consistency extending in a unified way to all bodies of knowledge; (3) *applicability*, or relatability to individual experience; (4) *adequacy*, or applicability to all domains of feeling and perception; and (5) *effectiveness*, or usableness as an instrument to cope with the total environment of human experience.[177] Elsewhere Ferré summarized these tests under three headings: consistency, coherence, and adequacy. In short, a metaphysical synthesis is valid only if it is able "to put all experience into a pattern that is *whole*, that is *pervasive*, and that is *adequate*."[178]

The application of these tests to the theistic model yields the following results for Ferré:[179] (1) Christianity has been *effective* in the past, but there is doubt about its effectiveness in the future. (2) There is little doubt about the *applicability* of love and reverence, but these are only minimal tests. (3) Christianity meets fairly well the very complex test of *adequacy*. (4) No definite contradictions have been demonstrated in Christianity, but neither have the proposed solutions to lesser problems gained universal *acceptance*. (5) There is a striking internal coherence in Christianity, but external *consistency* with other bodies of knowledge is not as obvious. Almost surely Scripture contains some empirical statements that are false, Ferré says, such as its claim that the sun stood still for Joshua. All in all, one's conclusion must be tentative, but since commitment is integral to any way of life, we must make our leap of faith based on what seems to be the most adequate religious system arising out of one's religious models.

The Test for a Propositional Scriptural Model: Edward J. Carnell (1919–67)

One of the most creative combinationalists among evangelical apologists was Edward Carnell, followed by his disciple Gordon Lewis. Firmly believing in the divine authority of Scripture, Carnell began with the Christian theistic model of the Triune God propositionally revealed in sacred Scripture. From this presuppositional starting point, he proceeded to test the truth of the Christian system by a combination of methods, which he at first labeled "systematic consistency."

The Rejection of Other Tests for Truth. Carnell reviews and discards other tests for truth. (1) *Instincts* "cannot be a test for truth, since they cannot distinguish between what is legitimately natural to the species and what is acquired. Only the mind can do that." (2) *Custom* is an inadequate test for truth because "customs can be good or bad, true or false. Something beyond and outside of custom, therefore, must test the validity of customs themselves." (3) Likewise *tradition*, which is a more normative body of customs handed down by a group from early times, is insufficient. "There are in existence so many traditions, so conflicting in essentials, that only in a madhouse could all be justified." (4) *Consensus gentium*, or the consent of the nations, fails as a test for truth, for all humans

once believed the world was the center of the universe. "A proposition must be true to be worthy of the belief of all, but it does not follow that what is believed by all is true." (5) Neither is *feeling* sufficient, for "without reason to guide it, feeling is irresponsible." (6) *Sense perception* is rejected by Carnell, for at best it is "a source for truth, not its definition or test. Our senses often deceive us." (7) Neither can *intuition* test truth, "since intuitions cannot detect false intuitions (and there are many)." (8) The *correspondence* of an idea to reality cannot be a test for truth, for "if reality is extra-ideational, then how can we compare our idea of the mind with it? How can the piano be brought into the mind to see if our idea is like it?" (9) *Pragmatism* is likewise inadequate, for on a purely pragmatic ground there is no way to distinguish between materialism's and theism's opposing views of the highest ultimate (whether matter or spirit). Furthermore, pragmatists have no right to expect their theory to be verified by future experience, since they have no basis on which to believe in the regularity of the world. In conclusion, Carnell argues that deductive proofs are inadequate because "reality cannot be connected by formal logic alone. . . . Logical truth cannot pass into material truth until the facts of life are introduced into the picture." And inductive proofs are invalid tests for truth, for "here one cannot rise above probability," for "a premise is demonstrated only when it is the necessary implication of a self-evident premise or when its contradiction is shown to be false."[180]

Systematic Consistency as an Adequate Test for Truth. Since all we find in history is probability and all we find in logic is formal validity, we cannot have complete truth until we unite these two elements. Carnell writes, "Truth is the properly constructed meaning of *all* experience. Perfect coherence always involves two elements: the law of contradiction to give formal validity, and concrete facts of history to give material validity," for "without formal validity we have no universality and necessity in truth, and without material validity we have no relevance to the world in which we live." Systematic consistency as Carnell conceives of it involves two elements: (1) There is "horizontal self-consistency" so that "all of the major assumptions of the position be so related together that they placate the rules of formal logic, chief of which is the law of contradiction." (2) There must be a "vertical fitting of the facts." This means, then, that "coherence involves an interpretation of the real concrete facts of human history—rocks, bones, and plants." Carnell sees "facts" as including both "external experience"—that is, history—and "internal experience"—namely, humanity's rational and moral experience.[181] (3) In another work, Carnell develops this last point into what he calls a "third method of knowing." Not all knowledge is by acquaintance or inference. Some knowledge comes by "moral self-acceptance." This he describes as "personal rectitude, knowledge by moral self-acceptance, and moral responsibility."[182] Since Carnell admittedly derives this third way from Søren Kierkegaard, we may call it the test of existential relevance. Summarizing, then, there are three tests for truth in Carnell: consistency, coherence, and existential relevance. Or, since the second category is subdivided into internal and external, there are actually four tests for truth: logical consistency, internal personal coherence, external empirical adequacy, and existential relevance. At this point, there is a marked similarity between Ferré and Carnell on tests for truth. However, once the tests are applied by Carnell, his conclusions clearly differ from those of Ferré.

Testing Christianity by Systematic Consistency. Carnell claims that systematic consistency, "as a proof for any worldview that is worth talking about, cannot rise above rational probability." The first reason that Christianity cannot rise above probability is that "it is founded on historical facts, which by their very nature, cannot be demonstrated with geometric certainty." The second reason why "Christianity cannot formally demonstrate its truth is that it is based upon moral values," and "value is a point of personal interest and appreciation beyond which there is no further ground of appeal."

Just "as you can lead a horse to water but you cannot make him drink, so you can lead a man to Christ but you cannot make him trust in Him." However, one can gain moral assurance that "grows out of a conviction that a proposition is coherent, not that it may be geometrically demonstrated." By moral assurance, Carnell means that "apprehended strength of evidence which causes us to be convinced of the truth of a given meaning-pattern, and to act upon its strength."[183]

With this understanding of the probability of proof and moral certainty in mind, Carnell proceeds to apply his tests to Christianity. He begins with a systematic analysis of starting points, for "the Christian believes that starting points control both the method and conclusion. Philosophy is like a railway without switches—once a man is committed to a given direction, he is determined in his outcome." Carnell sees three possible starting points: (1) a *temporal* starting point, or natural conditioning that one receives from adolescence to adulthood. This he rejects because "it is common to all men and therefore cancels out." (2) A *logical* starting point, or coordinating ultimate, which gives being and meaning to our experience, is also rejected, for "all logical ultimates must be tested," since there are radical differences between Thales's Water, Plato's Good, and the Christian's Trinity. (3) A *synoptic* starting point is necessary, for it is "the answer to the question, 'How do you prove the logical starting point?'"[184]

Carnell views three possible synoptic starting points: (1) *Internal ineffable* experience, or that "which brings an immediate assurance to the soul of the reality that is overwhelming and ineffable, as the mystic experience of being swallowed up in God." "We must pass over this," Carnell says, "for reasons stated earlier. Truth is systematic consistency and must be expressed in communicable propositions. But this is impossible in mysticism." (2) Likewise, *external effable* experience is rejected. Sense experience, whether of Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas, must be rejected "because of its inability to provide immutable truth. Truth, like water, rises no higher than its source." Agreeing with Hume's skeptical empiricism, Carnell argues that despite Aquinas's five futile attempts to prove God, "if truth is to be universal and necessary, it cannot be derived from an analysis of sense perception, for from flux only flux can come." (3) This leaves us with *internal effable* experience as a starting point—that is, with "universal and necessary principles, which are independent of sense perception." In order to test the truth of a system, we must have resident in the soul some unchanging principles, principles that are capable of being expressed in words.[185]

The only alternative to empiricism, then, is a kind of "Christian rationalism" such as Augustine's teaching that "the mind by natural endowment from the Creator, enjoys immediate apprehension of those standards which make our search for the true, the good, and the beautiful meaningful." "To speak meaningfully of the true, the good, and the beautiful . . . we must have criteria; but criteria that are universal and necessary must be found other than in the flux of sense perception." Otherwise, "how do we know that a thing must be coherent to be true, if the soul, by nature, is not in possession of the conviction?" And "how is it that we are able confidently to say that what is good today will be good tomorrow, unless we lodge our theory of the good in something outside the process of history?" In brief, "how can we know what the character of all reality is, so as to act wisely, unless God tells us?" "Revelation, then, is a condition *sine qua non* for our soul's well-being." As the psalmist rightly said, "Man can see light only in the Light; . . . all truth is the reflection into the soul of the truth that is in God." This revelation can be either "natural" or "special," but "the data which special revelation supplies is needed to supplement that data which natural revelation displays." For the intellect of man "is incompetent to complete a philosophy of life without special revelation from God. Because of our sinful hearts, which vitiate the evidence of nature, a more sure voice is needed to lead us into a theory of reality which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts."[186]

Within natural revelation, Carnell includes the knowledge of himself and the knowledge of God. In "knowing what truth is, we know what God is, *for* God *is truth*. God is perfect consistency." But, Carnell adds, "This argument for God does not constitute a demonstration; rather it is an analysis. . . . Proof for God is parallel to proof for logic; logic must be used to prove logic." With regard to the latter, Carnell believes the laws of logic to be innate, for "if we have not innate knowledge of the rules for right thinking, right thinking cannot start; but right thinking *can* start; therefore, the rules are innate." "Apart from the God Who has revealed Himself in Scripture, we could not *meaningfully* say that murder will be wrong tomorrow; but we *can* so speak; therefore, God, the Author of our moral nature, exists." There is even a knowledge of God through nature, for "to be sure, the world is regular; it is conducive to our happiness; and it is harmonious; but it will do little good so to speak until we first possess those standards in relation to which such statements are significant." But again we are reminded by Carnell, "This is not a formal demonstration of God's existence; it is simply proof by coherence." That is, there is no other way to make sense out of our experience *except by this presupposition*. But general revelation, however helpful in these regards, is insufficient to give us knowledge of salvation. As Calvin said, general revelation "ought not only excite us to the worship of God, but likewise to awaken and arouse us to the hope of a future life. . . . But, notwithstanding the clear representations given by God in the mirror of his works . . . such is our stupidity, that, always inattentive to these obvious testimonies, we derive no advantage from them." We must, then, have recourse to special revelation.[187]

The appeal to special revelation—that is, to the "full and whole sixty-six canonical books, which make up the Bible"—is, like any other hypothesis, "verified when it results in an implicative system which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts." But Carnell stresses one point: "When we leave natural for special revelation, we are not bifurcating epistemology; the Christian operates under one major premise—the existence of the God Who has revealed Himself in Scripture." And, he continues, "we are not exchanging reason for faith . . . ; rather we are seeking to strengthen the faith which we already have, for faith is a resting of the soul in the sufficiency of the evidence." The Bible is needed to give us more evidence, for "truth is systematically constructed meaning, and if the Bible fulfills this standard, it is just as true as Lambert's law of transmission. Any hypothesis is verified when it smoothly interprets life."[188]

Carnell defends both the fact and necessity of special revelation. On the first point he contends that "no cogent philosophical argument can be introduced to preclude the possibility of revelation." "One can know whether God has revealed Himself or not only after examining all the facts of reality, for any one fact overlooked may be the very revelation itself. . . . To track God down, therefore, one must at least be everywhere at the same time, which is to say, he must be God Himself." In essence, "if a man says there is no God, he simply makes himself God, and thus revelation is made actual. If he says there is a God, the only way he can know this is by God's having revealed Himself, for the Almighty is powerful enough not to give any clues of His existence if He so elects; and again revelation is actual." And "if we have succeeded in showing that generic revelation is possible, the same argument holds for special revelation," for "the fundamental reason why we need a special revelation is to answer the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' Happiness is our first interest, but this happiness cannot be ours until we know just how God is going to dispose of us at the end of history." If Carnell is asked which revelation one should accept, he replies: "Accept that revelation which, when examined, yields a system of thought which is horizontally self-consistent and which vertically fits the facts of history." And in view of all the facts, "the Christian does not arbitrarily accept the Bible as

the word of God; he feels he cannot be restrained from so making that hypothesis, for to elect any other position would be to fly in the face of the facts."[189]

Some Essential Tenets of Combinationalism

The starting points of combinationalists often differ. Some begin in empirical experience (as Ramsey) while others start with the revelation in Scripture as known through innate rational and moral principles (as Carnell). But the *test* for the truth of their system is essentially the same—namely, a combination of consistency, factual adequacy, and moral or religious relevance. From these similarities emerge several common emphases in combinational methodologies.

1. Combinationalists agree that no one test for truth (such as logical consistency or empirical adequacy) is adequate. At the minimum, both facticity and rationality are necessary, and existential or religious relevance is often included as well. Truth tests must be horizontal (logical) as well as vertical (factual). Combinationalism attempts to be comprehensive.

2. Combinationalists are usually presuppositional in their starting point. Starting points are all-important and are not self-justifying. One ends on the track on which one begins. Starting points are not neutral or natural, or, if they are, they must at least be justified. Certainly there are no apodictic (i.e., necessarily true) starting points either in pure reason or in unstructured sense experience. Formal logic is empty, and sense experience alone needs structure or meaning.

3. Experience is not self-interpreting. A model or an interpretive framework is necessary for meaning. Without a presupposed worldview, there can be no meaning or truth. The very possibility of speaking meaningfully depends on an ordered structure within which the discourse can take place.

4. Truth is modeled after a scientific hypothesis. That is, the hypothesis proposed must be tested by consistency and its ability to fit the facts of experience. If it lacks either consistency or factual adequacy, it is falsified.

An Evaluation of Combinationalism

Positive Contributions of Combinationalism

1. Combinationalism recognizes the need for an interpretive framework or metaphysical model. Facts do not speak for themselves. Truth does not reside in facts as such. Only fact plus meaning can be the basis for truth. And meaning does not arise naturally out of facts. Rather, meaning is something attributed to facts from the outside. It is necessary to presuppose a worldview or framework within which a fact can have meaning. Otherwise, one is left with bare, meaningless facticity. Facts and experience may be the basis for meaning, but the data alone cannot provide what meaning should be given to them. Unless the "stuff" of experience is structured by a meaning-model, it is not possible to speak of the meaningfulness or truth of that system of interpretation. One must indeed presuppose a metaphysical model of the universe before it is even possible to make ultimate truth claims.

2. Combinationalists move in the right direction by the attempt to be comprehensive in the test for the truth of a world and life view, what in the German is called a *Weltanschauung*. Merely one dimension of the truth question is not enough. Worldview truths must cover all that is in the world. To single out either the rational element or the empirical element alone in order to test the truth of a worldview that includes rational, empirical, and even existential elements is decidedly narrow and

inadequate. Both Ferré and Carnell saw clearly the need to test the truth of the entire Christian system. Both saw at least three basic elements in this test: the rational, the empirical, and the existential. Ramsey speaks of at least two, consistency and empirical fit, and implies the religious relevance in the nature of the disclosure model. Combining the various aspects of reality in the truth question does, indeed, seem to be a valid insight, for even though truth itself may be formally limited to the propositional statements, nonetheless the realities and dimensions discussed in a *Weltanschauung* are not limited to propositions or statements. Feelings, attitudes, virtues, and interpersonal relations—to name a few—are all part and parcel of a complete worldview and must be accounted for when one is assessing the truth of the overall system. Value and livability cannot be bifurcated from truth, even though they are not a complete or even adequate test for truth in themselves.

3. Finally, combinationalism does serve as an adequate test for truth within certain contexts, particularly for a scientific theory. Granted a certain perspective, there is sometimes only one systematically consistent way to interpret all the facts. For example, in the context of a football game, tackling another intentionally would not be morally culpable. But given the serious context of life, sometimes knocking another down cannot be reasonably interpreted in any other way than as a morally culpable action. Or if one grants the context of testimony under oath in a courtroom, then intentionally falsifying information can never be reasonably justified as "jesting." Likewise, granting that this is a theistic universe, in which a miracle can be defined as an unusual, naturally uncontrollable and unrepeatable event, it may be unreasonable to conclude that the resurrection of Christ is not a miracle. However, granting the overall context or framework of a naturalistic world, the resuscitation of Jesus's corpse could not possibly be interpreted as a miracle, for miracles can occur only where there is a God. No acts of God are possible unless there is a God who can act. But in a purely naturalistic universe there is no God; nature is, as it were, "the whole show." Facts, then, cannot be handled with complete arbitrariness within a given universe—at least not when *all* the facts are considered. But when one is in reasonable possession of all relevant facts, then, as in a courtroom context, there can sometimes be a decision "beyond reasonable doubt" as to which interpretation best fits the stated context. Ignoring or overlooking important or relevant facts can lead to the wrong interpretation in some contexts. For instance, any reasonable person of good sense with all the facts about smashed cars, broken glass, skid marks, bleeding people, and so on should reasonably conclude that an accident has occurred, *provided that* what is observed was *in the context of an everyday happening* at an intersection, and not, for example, on a stage in Hollywood. In short, given a specific context, logical consistency and empirical adequacy may be a very adequate test for truth.

Negative Criticism of Combinationalism

1. The foregoing contribution of combinationalism leads to an important criticism: *when testing worldviews*, we cannot presuppose the truth of a given context or framework, for that is precisely what a worldview provides. Combinationalism cannot be a test for the overall context (or macromodel) by which the very facts, to which the combinationalists appeal, are given meaning. An apologist, for example, cannot legitimately appeal to the miracle of Christ's resurrection as a proof for the existence of God (see chap. 5). On the one hand, unless there already is a God to perform that miracle (or act of God), the resurrection cannot be a miraculous confirmation of God's existence. Special acts of God presuppose a God who can so act. And to presuppose a God who can act in order to prove by one of his acts that he exists is viciously circular reasoning. On the other hand, if one *grants* that God already exists, then the resurrection may very well be a miraculous way of

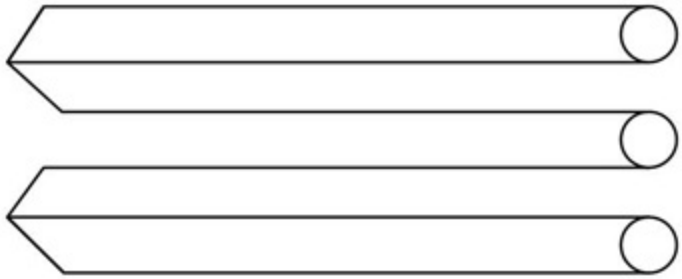
confirming that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God. But this is precisely what cannot be granted by nontheists, for it is the whole theistic worldview that is in question, and the opponent cannot grant the entire issue under question. Facts make sense only in granted contexts. Theism is an overall context or model of meaning for the universe. Hence, no theist can rightfully appeal to a theistic interpretation of facts (such as an interpretation of a resuscitated corpse as a miraculous resurrection) as a test for the truth of the theistic way of interpreting the universe. Total worldviews cannot be tested from facts within the worldview, which gain their very meaning from the worldview itself.

2. Combinationalism is a form of the "leaky bucket" fallacy. It says, in effect, that empiricism is not an adequate test for truth, existentialism is not an adequate test for truth, and rationalism is not an adequate test for truth. However, if they are combined, then they become an adequate test for a worldview. But if one leaky bucket does not hold the water, then two or three leaky buckets will not do the job either. Just adding inadequate solutions together does not make an adequate solution.

Unless there is some way to correct the inadequacy of one test for truth by another, simply adding tests will not provide an adequate test for truth. But the problem with rationalism as a test for truth is not corrected by evidentialism. Rationalism does not fail simply because it provides no factual referents for thought, but because in its strong form it provides no rationally inescapable arguments, and in its weak form it is only a test for the possibility of a system's truth. The law of noncontradiction can show only that a system is wrong if it has contradictions in its central tenets. But there may be several such systems that are internally noncontradictory. Likewise, as we have seen, there may be many worldviews that account for all the data of experience. Hence, once one steps inside another worldview, one may find that its major tenets are consistent, that it accounts for all the facts of experience as interpreted through its framework, and that it is existentially relevant to humans within that overall perspective. It is noteworthy in this regard that Ferré recognizes this very fact, admitting that other models, even nontheistic ones, may be of a weight equal to, or even greater than, that of the Christian model when tested by his criteria.[190] And if Western theists admit this, then surely the sophisticated Hindu or Buddhist could adequately apply a combinational test for truth and thereby avoid discarding his or her worldview in favor of theism.

Further, the problem with factualism or experientialism is not corrected by adding an interpretive framework—not, at least, when there are competing models that may likewise be applied to all the facts. It merely shifts the question again to the justification of choosing one model over another. No mystical intuition of models or alleged divine revelation of them will solve the problem, for that either begs the whole question or else opens the door for all competing views to claim divine revelation for their models. Nor will it help to claim that one model "fits" the facts better than another. For the facts take their very meaning from the "fit" given them by the interpretive model, as the next critique indicates.

3. Empirical fit is inadequate to test a worldview because "fit" is something cut out for the facts by the overall pattern of the worldview. That is, the very meaning a fact has as a fact within a system is not found in its bare facticity but by the way it is modeled or incorporated by that given worldview. The following diagram illustrates that from one viewpoint the same lines may be conceived as two square legs, but from another perspective they may form three round legs. In both interpretations of this figure, the facts are identical; only the modeling of them differs.



A similar problem emerged in some ancient languages that did not divide letters into words but left the reader to decide from the context. For example, the English sentence "Heisnowhere," as a postmortem announcement on Jesus, could mean two entirely different things depending on how one structures the letters. It could mean "He is now here" or "He is nowhere." No appeal to the bare facts alone can solve the problem; only a context, model, or framework from outside can do it. And when one framework works as well as another, there is no way, by mere appeal to differing models, to adjudicate the problem that each in its own way accounts for all the facts. For different systems may account equally well for the same set of fact. Or, at least differing systems may account equally well for an equal number of facts, while having each has difficulty with others.

The temptation to simply choose the system that best "works" or fits one's life needs has already been discussed under pragmatism (see chap. 6). As we saw, a pragmatic test will not suffice, for it proves only what "works," not what is true. Differing systems may work equally well for different persons, at least in the short run or in this life, and no one but God can predict the long run with certainty. Yet to wait until after death for verification is too late to settle the truth question that we have now. It would seem, then, that all roads away from the dilemma have dead ends. Combinationalism has no way to know whether the model fits the facts best because the facts are all prefitted by the model to give meaning to the whole from the very beginning. So it begs the question to speak of, say, the facts of religious experience best fitting a theistic model if the facts were gathered in the first place from those having theistic religious experiences. In like manner, the fact of the resurrection of Christ is already a theistic "interpra-fact" and as such will naturally fit better into a theistic scheme of things than it will into a naturalistic worldview. However, if one speaks merely about the anomalous or unusual event of a resuscitated corpse in the framework of a naturalistic worldview, the bare fact also fits the framework.

4. Combinationalism is at best a test only for the falsity, not the truth, of a worldview, for more than one view may be both consistent and adequate, but those that are not both consistent and adequate will be false. Hence, combinationalism would at best eliminate only false worldviews (or aspects of worldviews). It cannot establish one worldview as true over all opposing worldviews. This is so because more than one worldview may be both consistent and adequate.

5. As noted above, systematic consistency is really a model adopted from science that is used to do metaphysical. But as Étienne Gilson demonstrates in his insightful book *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, it is a methodological category mistake to assume that a method that fits one discipline can be used in another.[191] What works to test a scientific theory, which merely studies being insofar as it is observable, will not be adequate to understand Being in so far as it is Being (i.e., metaphysical). Or what works to test the truth of propositions within a system (e.g., systematic consistency) does not necessarily work for conflicting propositions between systems.

Likewise, mathematical models that serve well in the abstract world are not adequate for understanding the actual world. Zeno's paradoxes illustrate this point well, for in the abstract world

there are an infinite number of points between points A and B on a line. However, in the real world there are not an infinite number of points, otherwise we would never be able to travel between two points, but we can and do. Hence, mathematical models are not suited for the metaphysical (real) world.

Summary and Conclusion

Combinationalism provides some significant insights into the truth question. Models or interpretive frameworks are necessary for meaning, and meaning has both logical and factual dimensions, and perhaps even an existential one. However, as a test for the truth of an overall interpretive model or worldview, combinationalism will not suffice. By simply adding together inadequate tests for truth one does not get an adequate test. The second leaky bucket or the third one does not hold any more water than the first one. Furthermore, since opposing models may do the rational, factual, and existential job equally well, vindication of one truth claim over another will not emerge from the test of combinationalism. Indeed, the very claim that the facts fit better in one system than in another begs the question, for the facts gain their very meaning from the system or overall model. And once the facts are "precut" to fit the pattern, it should be no surprise to anyone that they fit better in that system. Opposing systems can account equally well for all or equal numbers of facts. Hence, combinational tests are insufficient to exclude opposing systems, in which case they are ineffective in establishing the truth of any one system over others.

Select Readings for Chapter 7

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8
Formulating an Adequate Test for Truth

In the preceding chapters, we have set forth and evaluated various tests for truth. Each test in turn has proved itself inadequate in testing the truth of a worldview. They have failed for different reasons, but behind each insufficient test for truth has been at least one common element: the inability to establish one system and eliminate all competing systems that claim to be true. This in turn is based on the inability to establish criteria for truth that transcends worldview. Time has now come to develop an adequate alternative. There will be two levels to this proposal: first, the basis for testing the truth of an *overall worldview*, such as theism or pantheism; second, the means of testing for the truth of competing truth claims *within a worldview*.

The Test for the Truth of a Worldview

A summary of the results to this point is necessary to understanding the direction of this proposal. It was concluded that all the other proposed tests for truth failed for the same basic reasons: either they were self-defeating or they were too inclusive, not eliminating all other worldviews.

The Self-Defeating Nature of Positions That Deny Truth about a Worldview Can Be Known

Skepticism recommends a suspension of judgment about truth. The skeptic claims that dilemmas, equipollence of arguments, divergence of opinion, the relativity of thought, and so forth lead one to conclude that truth is unknowable. The wise person will simply withhold belief, we are told by the skeptic. As commendable as this view may be in many cases, it cannot be consistently applied to all truth claims. Complete skepticism is self-defeating. The very affirmation that all truth is unknowable is itself presented as a truth affirmation.[192] As a truth statement purporting that no truth statements can be made, it undercuts itself. If it is not a truth statement, or if it is not a universal truth statement, then it is not even in the philosophical arena. In short, the claim of the skeptic and agnostic that "truth is unknowable" is either (1) a universal truth claim, (2) a particular truth claim, or (3) neither a universal nor particular truth claim. If it is a universal truth claim, then it undercuts itself, for it is claiming that no true statements (including its own) can be made. If it is offered only as a particular truth claim—namely, that some (many, most, etc.) truths cannot be known—then it is self-consistent. However, in this case it does not eliminate the possibility that one can know or establish the truth of some other worldview. And if the question of the truth of these views is important or momentous to a person, then it would be a kind of defeatism, if not a cruelty, to dissuade him from attempting to discover what seemed so significant to his life and thought. Finally, if the skeptic claims to be making no truth claim at all in recommending suspension of judgment about all truth claims, then the skeptic must explain how a statement about whether truth is knowable can avoid being a truth statement. To

turn the tables, why could not one be skeptical about all skeptical statements without being a skeptic? Or, how can the skeptic claim sanctuary in alleged metatruth statements about what is knowable in the realm of truth?

The very claim that the premise of skepticism ("all truth is unknowable") is not a truth claim would automatically disqualify it philosophically, for philosophy is concerned with truth. To allow metatruth or nontruth statements to dictate whether one can know truth is as unphilosophical as one can get. So if the skeptic maintains that "all truth is unknowable" is a truth statement, then it is self-defeating (if universal) or unsuccessful (if limited). Otherwise it is not a truth claim—in which case it is not even philosophical; that is, it has nothing to do with truth.

The claim that skepticism is merely a nontruth proposal about the question of truth, which one finds most fruitful and usable for whatever theoretical or practical reasons, will not suffice. First, this proposal does not eliminate contrary positions. One may conclude that dogmatism is right for the same reasons. Second, this proposal implies a consistency test or pragmatic test for the truth of skepticism and opens it to all the criticisms of these positions (see chaps. 2, 6, 7). Furthermore, especially the pragmatic test for the skeptical proposal is double-edged, and it boomerangs. Skepticism may not work for most in the long run. Indeed, as Hume confessed, one of the most persistent arguments against skepticism is that even the skeptic cannot live it completely and consistently. Hence, skepticism cannot be established pragmatically. And even if the allegedly nontruth proposal of skepticism were not defeated pragmatically, it is still self-defeating. No statement about all truth can disavow all truth implications, and the skeptical proposal is a statement about all truth. Even working presuppositions about truth must be cognitive and meaningful. And whatever is meaningful must be subject to truth or falsity via the law of noncontradiction, for apart from noncontradiction one cannot even know what the statement means. But if the skeptical proposal is subject to the truth test of noncontradiction, it cannot avoid being offered as a truth statement. In short, to disclaim the possibility of knowing any truth is indeed a truth claim of the highest and most serious kind. Truth cannot be denied unless some truth is being affirmed.

Likewise, agnosticism is self-defeating.[193] In its unlimited form, it claims that all knowledge about reality (i.e., truth) is impossible. But this itself is offered as a truth about reality, in which case it defeats itself. In the weaker form of limited agnosticism there is no problem, but neither is there success in eliminating all knowledge about reality. Simply to affirm that one does not (or even cannot) know something about reality does not really eliminate the possibility that one can (or even does) know something about reality. But the disclaimer of *all* knowledge about reality is self-stultifying, for it is offered as a truth about reality that no truths about reality can be known. If true, this would be false. If it is true about reality that no truth can be affirmed of reality, then neither can this alleged truth (of agnosticism) be true about reality. But if it is not a true claim about reality, then it must be false. Hence, if it were true, then it would be false. And if it is false, then it is false. So in either case total agnosticism cannot be true.

There is a more subtle form of philosophical agnosticism to which even some evangelical thinkers fall victim.[194] It may be called the perspectivity of all truth. The basic premise is that even though truth is knowable, nonetheless *all truth is perspectival*. What is not always clearly seen or fully appreciated under cover of the apparent humility in this position is that it either harbors within its bosom a radical dogmatism or else reduces to a complete agnosticism. The claim is either that all truth is perspectival, or else that all truth except this view of truth is perspectival. If it means the former, then it is either self-defeating or special pleading. It is self-defeating to say all truth is perspectival including this one nonperspectival statement about all truth. In this case, on the one hand,

one is making a nonperspectival statement to the effect that all truth including itself is perspectival. On the other hand, if one claims special status for that one statement to the effect that all other statements are perspectival except this one, then one is pleading for special treatment of this statement. Why cannot any other opposing position claim the same for itself? Why cannot a nonperspectivalist claim that the perspectivity view is itself only a limited perspective on reality? In which case, a broader perspective might eliminate the need to say that all truth is limited by perspective. Indeed, the central issue of the perspectivity view misses the very nature of a total worldview. There are limited perspectives within an overall view, but the *overall* view itself is no longer a claim about limited perspectives.

Hence, if perspectivity is offered as a worldview, then it is either self-defeating or else in the same category as other worldviews. For if the perspectivity view is an overall perspective on everything that is—which is what *worldview* means—the so-called perspectivity view, like any other view, is no longer a limited perspective. One may have a limited *basis* for justifying that one is taking this nonperspectival view of everything that is; nevertheless, the *perspective* taken in the view is not one among many limited stances, but is the overall view that one considers to be the only true and ultimate way to look at all things. That is precisely what a metaphysical position is—namely, the claim to possess the one true way to look at all of reality. Hence, the apparent humility of the perspectivity people is a confusion of the limited basis for taking a metaphysical position and the unlimited or all-encompassing perspective demanded by the very nature of the worldview taken. A finite person's basis will always be limited, but a person's view can be all-encompassing. One's grasp of metaphysical truth is conditioned by finitude, but the truth itself, if it is metaphysical, is unconditional.

The Inadequacy of Alternative Tests for Truth

Six alternative tests for truth were examined in the preceding chapters: rationalism, fideism, experientialism, evidentialism, pragmatism, and combinationalism. Each was weighed in the balances and found wanting for different reasons. The one insufficiency common to all these tests for truth is that none of them can definitively establish one worldview over another. Whatever applicability they may have *within* a worldview, none is sufficient to decide or adjudicate *between* or among worldviews.

Rationalism.[195] Rationalism, in the strong form of logically inescapable arguments, proves nothing since there is no way to prove with rational inescapability. It is always *logically* possible that nothing ever existed, including myself, the world, and God. Reality is not based on logical necessity. Nonexistence of everything is a *conceivable* state of affairs. And to say that the nonexistence of everything is an unaffirmable premise, because someone must exist to have the conception or to make the affirmation, only diverts the issue, for in this case one is defending the existence of something by its undeniability and not by its logical necessity. There is no logical necessity that demands that the conceiver or affirmer exist in the first place.

The weak form of rationalism—that is, noncontradictoriness—is also insufficient, for many competing worldviews may be internally consistent. The law of noncontradiction as such is only a test for falsity, not a test for truth. That is, a view is wrong if it is contradictory to itself, but it is not automatically true if it is noncontradictory or consistent with itself. There is no way by logic alone to prove that all views except one are contradictory, thus forcing one to adopt as true the only remaining view. Every major worldview is or can be consistent with its own basic axioms or presuppositions. Spinoza deduced pantheism logically from his axioms, and Descartes deduced theism logically from

his axioms. But how are we on the basis of reason alone to choose between the two competing sets of axioms? Other rationalists accept revelation as their basic axiom. But how do we know which alleged revelation to accept? Even revelational rationalists admit that one would have to be omniscient in order to definitively and finally apply the consistency test for truth, for one would have to know all the facts and relationships about all the truth systems in question in order to know which of them is ultimately consistent and which are ultimately contradictory. But since this is impossible in practice, the rational test for truth via noncontradictoriness is inadequate to establish the truth of one view over another.

Fideism.[196] As was seen earlier, fideism is not really a *test* for truth at all; it is simply a claim for truth. It reduces to the claim "this is true because I believe it to be true." But contrary beliefs are possible. Hence, simply believing a position is an inadequate basis for contending it is true vis-à-vis other views. And a fideist who offers evidence or reasons for fideism is no longer a fideist but an evidentialist or rationalist. But this is self-defeating.

Further, any appeal to some ground for belief other than the belief itself is, strictly speaking, not fideism. For instance, if someone believes Christianity to be true rather than Islam because it is more consistent or livable, that believer has imported a rational or pragmatic test for truth to support the belief. Such a person makes a fideistic *claim* but has a rational or pragmatic *test* for truth. But we are discussing fideism only as an inadequate test for truth. The frequent recourse of fideists to other means of justifying their beliefs tends to verify its inadequacy as a test for truth. Beliefs alone are not self-justifying; they are only claims that call for confirmation outside themselves. *Credo ad absurdum* may be admirable to some, but it is justifiable to no one.

Experientialism.[197] As a test for truth, experientialism does not eliminate the possibility of other views being true. Experience is not self-justifying; it is not even self-interpreting. Experience is what persons have, while truth is what is affirmed about these experiences. Truth is propositional; it is an expression about experience. Whether the expression about experience is adequate cannot be determined by the experience alone, for the experience apart from the expression is like content without form, or "stuff" without structure. Events and experience can be structured and expressed in different ways. The most adequate or true structure or model cannot be determined by the experience itself, any more than gelatin can by itself determine which mold should form it into which shape. Differing models or worldviews refer to the same core of human experience as the basis of their opposing metaphysical views. Hence, theism cannot be established over pantheism on experience alone since both theists and pantheists have the same human conditions beneath their opposing systems. In a word, whatever is common to many cannot be used as uniquely supportive of only one.

What is more, to offer reasons why one experience is superior to another is self-defeating. In this case reason is more ultimate than the experience in determining what is true. Appealing to one experience (or aspect of experience) as superior begs the question, and going beyond experience to find reasons for one over another is no longer a form of experientialism.

Finally, the appeal to special experiences (mystical or whatever) will not aid any one worldview's claim over another because all can claim to have special experiences. Furthermore, if the experience is truly unique to one view and unavailable to another, then there is no way to use it as a truth support for one view *as opposed to* the others because it is private to that view. In other words, what is not available to them cannot be used against them. A worldview has a right to face its accusers and to view the evidence of their accusations; private experience cannot be a legitimate part of a public test for truth. Any test for truth competing for the minds of humans in general is a public test for truth. The tests for truth claimed by worldviews are definitely of this variety.

Evidentialism.[198] It was concluded earlier that evidentialism, like experientialism, is insufficient for testing a worldview because no facts are self-interpreting. All facts are interpreted by the context in which they appear, and ultimately by the worldview or ultimate context in which they appear. But if the facts gain their meaning and truth by the context, then they cannot be used to determine the truth of the context. This would be viciously circular. For instance, one cannot argue that the resuscitation of Jesus of Nazareth's body—granting that it did resuscitate—is an act of God (miracle) that proves Christian theism to be true, for only if this is already a theistic universe to begin with can one even interpret this event to be a miraculous resurrection or act of God. If to interpret an event as a resurrection or act of God already *presupposes* God's existence, then an event so interpreted cannot be used as a *proof* of God's existence. If the model gives the fact its meaning and truth values, then the fact cannot in turn be used to give the model its meaning and truth.

Indeed, there are many models capable of handling all the facts of experience. Naturalism can handle bodily resuscitation as an unusual natural event with no *known* cause. Pantheism can explain it as a concentrated manifestation of a God who is manifest in everything. In like manner, other views can handle all the facts by their macro or metaphysical models. The question is not one of bare facts but of the interpretation given the facts by divergent worldviews or models. There is no way to use the bare facts alone in order to justify one model of them over another. Indeed, there is probably no way to know the facts apart from the model or framework through which they are understood, for the very fact known involves the relationships or context in which it is known. Facts are not islands unto themselves; they are known in relationships or gestalts (patterns). And even if pure and isolatable facticity were knowable apart from contexts, it would be useless as a test for truth, for pure facticity or a bare fact as such has no truth value. It is neutral and cannot be given context or meaning—and hence truth value—by different models. Hence, bare facts as such cannot establish the truth of a model, and facts as interpreted by a model cannot be used to establish the truth of the model that provides the justification for interpreting the facts in that particular way.

Pragmatism.[199] The pragmatic test for the truth of a worldview is not capable of eliminating opposing worldviews either. What works for one individual might not for another. Pantheism works for the pantheist, and naturalism for the naturalist, in accord with their different models. On purely pragmatic grounds we might conclude that both theism and pantheism are true, since they seem to work for adherents of their respective worldviews in accordance with the worldviews' respective aspirations. But both cannot be true because they are mutually exclusive ways of viewing ultimate reality. Hence, pragmatism does not prove which view is true but merely which view seems to work for a person with certain desires and certain starting premises. Further, how can we know which system will work best for most humans in the long run? One would have to be God in order to know enough to establish the truth of one system. At best, finite humans may guess at the long-range results and "will to believe" whichever system tempts them on existential grounds. But this is no longer a pragmatic ground; it is a fideistic or experiential one, and as such it is subject to the criticisms of these views already given. In short, pragmatism is not capable of establishing one view as true over another.

At best, pragmatism manifests the *application* but not the *justification* of a worldview. It indicates whether a view about reality really works when applied to life. But workability and truth are not identical. Some things work very well but are not right (e.g., cheating). Other things do not seem to work as well in the short run, and we cannot determine the long run (e.g., honesty). Finally, the results of a belief or view may be unrelated to its rightness or truth. Winning the lottery does not prove that the winner was right for playing any more than losing proves that the others were wrong for playing.

Likewise, my child's disobedience to a misstated command does not make either my statement truly what I desired or the child's disobedience right, even though the results were what I really desired. Pragmatism is not a sufficient test for the truth of anything and says nothing to the test of the truth of worldviews.

Combinationalism.[200] The combinational test for truth is sometimes known as systematic consistency. It involves a combination of two or more of the foregoing tests for truth. Often it entails three tests: logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance. Whatever the form, combinationalism is insufficient as a test for the truth of a worldview because it does not eliminate the possibility of other views being true. For pantheism is as consistent with its premises, as adequate in explaining all the facts, and as relevant to the experience of a Hindu as Christianity is to a Christian. If one desires the cessation of craving and frustration, then pantheism provides a systematically coherent worldview. Of course, if one desires ultimate fulfillment and individual satisfaction, then Christian theism would be more systematically coherent. But there is the rub. How is one to judge which *desire* is right or which is the desire for truth? Neither view has the right to merely assume its goal to be the true one, for this merely begs the question. Neither view can eliminate the other on the basis of systematic consistency, for both have this feature in their sophisticated forms. How, then, is truth to be adjudicated by a purely combinational test?

In the end combinationalism is not a new or different test for truth; it is simply a combination of other inadequate tests for truth. If rationalism alone or evidentialism alone or experientialism alone will not suffice, then how is combining their inadequacies going to do the job? Two more leaky buckets will not in the end hold any more water than one leaky bucket. Combinationalism does not patch the hole in any one of the tests for truth by adding others. The patches are just as porous as the pail. Adding up inadequate tests for truth, without correcting the inherent inadequacies, does not equal an adequate test for truth. Indeed, combinationalism is at best only a test for falsity of some views, not a test for the truth of one worldview, for more than one worldview may fit all the tests of combinationalism.

Setting Forth an Adequate Test for Truth

If the foregoing tests for truth were exhaustive, the epistemological consequences would be disastrous. If no test for truth is sufficient, then truth cannot be tested and established, and if truth cannot be established, then the Christian apologist is out of business. Fortunately, this is not the case, for there is a test for truth that meets the standards of adequacy; that is, it can establish one view over against opposing views.

Finding an Adequate Test for the Truth of a Worldview

The reason that the foregoing tests for truth fail is that they are all testing a particular aspect of reality, but not reality (being) as such. Some are fitting to test reality insofar as it is rational, or insofar as it is believable, or experiential, or evidential, or workable (livable). Obviously, none of these by their very nature were suited to test reality *as such*. They were adequate to test some aspect of being, but not *being insofar as it is being*. That is, they served to understand a particular dimension of reality, but not to understand the whole of reality. In short, they were not suited to the study of metaphysics, which provides an overall understanding of all reality.

Finding an Adequate Way to Understand Reality as Such

The only way to understand being or reality as such is by the first principles of being, for all thought about reality is based on and is reducible to the first principles of reality. These principles must be self-evident since everything else is evident only in terms of them. Therefore, these principles must be evident in terms of themselves (i.e., self-evident).

Since these principles are not evident in terms of something else, they are not known discursively (from premises to conclusion); they are known intuitively. That is, we just "see" that they are truth once we know what they are saying. What we see is that their predicates can be reduced to their subject. For example, "All triangles are three-sided figures" is self-evident since the predicate nominative "three-sided figures" is saying the same thing as "triangles." This is called reductive foundationalism.

It is important to distinguish *reductive* foundationalism from *deductive* foundationalism, which begins in pure thought and attempts to deduce other truths from it. This latter, practiced by Baruch Spinoza, is also called geometric deductivism, and it was critiqued earlier (in chap. 2). By contrast, reductive foundationalism, as in Thomas Aquinas, begins with reality and proceeds to reduce what we know intuitively about it to self-evident first principles.[201]

Stating the First Principles of Reality

The first principles about reality have the following characteristics: (1) They apply to all of reality, not to just some aspect of it. (2) They are self-evident; that is, once one understands the terms of the proposition, one knows them to be self-evident or reducible to what is self-evident. (3) They are undeniable in that any attempt to deny them uses them in that very denial. The first of these principles of being is the principle that something exists.

1. **Being is.** That is, something exists. This is called *the principle of existence.* This is undeniable since the one who denies it must exist in order to deny. Hence, while the *source* of first principles is intuition about being, the *test* for their truth is *undeniability*; that is, they cannot be denied without affirming them (either directly or indirectly) in the very denial itself.
2. **Being is being.** This is known as *the principle of identity*. Being is identical to being. A thing is identical to itself. Again, this is literally undeniable since it cannot be denied unless it is implied.
3. **Being is not nonbeing.** This is called *the principle of noncontradiction*. Opposites cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense. This too is undeniable since the claim that opposites can both be true assumes that the opposite of this claim cannot be true.
4. **Either being or nonbeing.** This is *the principle of excluded middle*. There is nothing between being and nonbeing. Hence, something must either be or not be. It cannot be both and non-being. This too is undeniable since the denial of it ("Both being and nonbeing") is a contradiction.
5. **Nonbeing cannot produce being.** This is *the principle of causality*. Nothing cannot cause anything since nothing does not even exist, and what does not exist cannot cause anything. Only something can produce something. This too is reducible to a self-evident principle since it is contradictory to affirm that a thing both exists (in order to cause) and does not exist.

6. **Being causes being similar to itself.** This is *the principle of analogy.* An effect resembles its efficient cause. Like produces like. Being shares being. Being has nothing else to share than being. Being cannot give what it does not have. But what it gives (i.e., being), it must have had to give.

From these principles, many other undeniable conclusions can be drawn, such as either a being is contingent or necessary; a necessary being cannot cause another necessary being; every being that is caused to exist is a contingent being; and so on.[202] With these undeniable first principles of being, we can determine which worldview is true. By "true" we mean what corresponds to reality. This correspondence view of truth is undeniable since any denial implies that it corresponds to reality.[203]

Undeniability as a Test for Truth

Since all these first principles are undeniable, the real test for truth is undeniable. We need to examine what is meant by the undeniability of a position. It does not mean that a view is *unsayable* or unstatable. Even complete nonsense can be said or stated. For example, one can state that there are square triangles even though the statement is contradictory. One can also state, "The sound of the music is the color red," but this too is nonsense. The ability to state "I cannot express myself in words" is one thing, but the ability to meaningfully affirm this is another. In this case, the statement is self-defeating, since it is an expression in words claiming that no expression in words can be so made. From these illustrations we wish to draw two conclusions. First, not everything sayable is meaningful; nonsense is sayable or statable. Second, some sayable things are false. For example, one cannot affirm one's own nonexistence. In both cases what one affirms is denied in the very process or act of affirmation. This leads to a further distinction—namely, between that which is directly undeniable and that which is indirectly undeniable.

The Direct Undeniability of Something

Direct undeniability occurs when the statement itself provides the information to defeat itself. The statement "I cannot express myself in words" is an example of this.[204] The statement is itself an expression in words. One need not look further to know it is false. It directly destroys itself. The datum uttered is self-annihilating of the thought expressed by that datum. Another example is "I cannot think," for that directly involves thought in order to even think it.

The Indirectly Undeniable

The directly undeniable means that the very *act* of thinking or expressing something is self-defeating. The act of thinking by which one thinks that one cannot think is not meaningfully thinkable, and the very act of speaking by which one says that one cannot speak is really not speakable in a meaningful way. (It is sayable, but it can't be true because it is self-refuting.) But what about statements such as "I came to the conclusion that I know everything intuitively"? The statement itself does not provide the data for its own self-destruction. The very *act* of thinking this conclusion does not self-destruct. So it is not directly self-stultifying in the same sense as the other examples. However, there is another sense in which the statement "I came to the conclusion that I know

everything intuitively" is undeniably self-defeating; it is *indirectly* self-defeating, for the very *process* of "coming to" that conclusion was a deductive or inferential one, and that very process is at odds with the statement that all knowledge is possessed intuitively, without deduction or inference. Hence, although the *act* of expressing the statement is not inconsistent, the *process* by which the statement was derived contradicts the thought expressed in the statement.

Our purpose here is not to make a comprehensive typology of kinds of self-defeating statements, but merely to point out some varieties sufficient to illustrate the test for truth via self-destruction whether in the act, process, or basis for making the statement. The following chapters will indicate just how this will be applied in practice to various claimants of truth.

Definitional Undeniability

The affirmation "triangles must have three sides" is undeniably true. But this does not mean that there is any such thing as a triangle. It means only that *if* there were a triangle, it would have three sides. Or, there is no other meaningful way to define a triangle than as a three-sided figure, for that is what we mean by triangularity. Likewise, one might claim, as many Christians do, that *if* there is a God, God must be a necessary Being. This would not necessarily imply that there is known to be a God, but that if one exists, then that God could not have come into being or cease to be, but must necessarily always be. In brief, there is a definitional necessity in conceiving of God. And if one were actually found to exist, then this would actually be as true of God as triangularity would be true of an actual triangle. Both would be undeniably true definitionally, even if neither God nor triangles exist actually. Many other examples could be multiplied. A few will suffice to further illustrate definitional undeniability: all wives are married, all circles are round, the whole is always more than any one part, and so on.

All of these, it may be charged, are purely mathematical or theoretical. As such, they are empty tautologies, and no tautology or definitional statement tells us anything about the real world. Are there any actually undeniable statements about existence?

Existential Undeniability

An affirmative answer is demanded to the foregoing question. Existence, at least my existence, is actually undeniable. I must exist in order to make the denial. Nonexistents do not affirm or deny; they are not and they speak not. Whenever I attempt to deny my existence, I catch myself existing in the process of making the denial. So at least something is actually undeniable—namely, my own existence.

As was noted earlier, the rationalist has recourse to this argument to support rationalism. But since the argument does not show logical necessity, only actual undeniability, the rationalist has left purely rational ground for existential ground to make this move. My nonexistence is logically possible; it is not inconceivable that I exist not. No logical necessity is grounding my existence. Even if I cannot affirm that I *do not* exist, I can nonetheless meaningfully think that I *might* not exist. Of course, I must exist in order to conceive of my nonexistence. But the "must exist" does not mean "*logically* must," only "*actually* must." Unless I actually exist I cannot conceive of anything, for there is no "I" or "me" there at all. But this does not mean that my existence in the first place is based on logical necessity.

Whether one can justify the affirmation that anything exists necessarily is a question we leave for later. It will suffice here to show that the proposition "no statement that is true by definitional

necessity can also be true about reality" fails. The fact that squares must be defined as four-sided figures does not mean that one cannot exist. Furthermore, the attempt to affirm that no necessary statements can be made about reality is itself a necessary statement about reality and is, on that ground, self-defeating. To offer as a necessary truth about reality that there are no necessary truths about reality is self-destructive. If one has no necessary basis for saying that there are no necessary statements about reality, then it is possible that there are some; the possibility cannot be eliminated in advance. Existential truth cannot be legislated; it must be looked for in experience. What this search uncovers and whether it is undeniable will be discussed later. At present, the door is open for the possibility of some undeniable truth about ultimate reality. All attempts to lock the door turn out to be self-defeating.

In summation, whatever is undeniable is true, whether it is definitionally undeniable or existentially undeniable. If something definitionally undeniable is also found to be actually undeniable, then whatever is definitionally necessary to attribute to it, that it must necessarily actually have. That is, if we actually find a triangle, then it must actually have three sides. And, likewise, if a God is actually found to exist, then he must actually have all the characteristics that God must necessarily be conceived to have, such as eternity, immutability, and so forth.

Of course, there is no way to show in advance that theism is actually undeniable and all nontheisms are undeniably false. All we can say at present is that if one view is undeniable, then conversely the other, opposing views must be untrue. And if any view can be found to be undeniably true, then it is, ipso facto, untrue. As a work on Christian apologetics, this book will attempt to show that all nontheistic worldviews are directly or indirectly undeniable and only theism is not, and therefore only theism is true.[205] Further, if theism is based on all undeniable premises, then theism must be true, and all opposing views must be false.[206] Whether this is actually the case is the subject of chapters 9–14.

The Justification of Truth Statements within a Worldview

Establishing the truth of a worldview is a special problem and demands a specific test for truth. We have concluded that the traditional tests for truth will not suffice because they are inadequate to judge *between* worldviews. More than one worldview may be true on the grounds of rationalism, experientialism, evidentialism, and so forth. However, unaffirmability can falsify a worldview and undeniability can verify a worldview. Supposing this to be the case when judging *between* worldviews, we now come to the problem of determining what is true *within* a given worldview. It is here that combinationalism or systematic coherence seems to be the most adequate test for truth for several reasons, not the least of which is that it is impossible to find undeniability in historical and experiential matters.

The Reasons for Adopting Systematic Consistency

Once an overall framework has been determined, it follows that whatever most consistently and comprehensively fits into that system is true. If that system of truth is not only a worldview but a world and *life* view, then the applicability of that truth to life also becomes a crucial aspect of that truth. Several arguments support this contention.

First of all, the grounds for rejecting systematic consistency (or combinationalism) as a test *between* worldviews do not apply to using it as a test for truth *within* a given system or worldview. The main arguments against it as a test for a worldview are based on the fact that more than one system might be equally systematically consistent and that the facts within a system are given meaning by that system. But once the system and therefore the ultimate meaning of all facts within it are determined, these facts should not be interpreted in ways contrary to the system. And once it is determined that no other system is true, there is no external competing way to interpret these facts. Within a given system, consistency of interpretation and comprehensive coverage of all facts are definitive. Error arises when the interpretation is either internally inconsistent or else not factually all-inclusive.

For instance, if this is a theistic universe and one refuses to accept the possibility of an empirical event indicating a miracle, one is inconsistent. In a theistic universe miracles can happen and a given event (e.g., the resurrection of Jesus) might just be a miracle. It is inconsistent with the system to rule it out. Further, if this is a theistic universe and one fails to take into account *all the known facts*, one might be led to accept Judaism rather than Christianity. Suppose it is a fact that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled Old Testament prophecy to be the Jewish Messiah. If so, only by overlooking (or negating or not counting) these facts can one who desires truth remain in Judaism rather than acknowledge the truth of Christianity. In short, *all* the facts interpreted in an internally *consistent* way are a sufficient test for truth within a given metaphysical system.

Second, once a system of truth is established, it follows logically that whatever is consistent with that system is true and whatever is not consistent with it is not true. *Systematic* consistency follows from the establishment of a *system* of truth. Or, to state it another way, once a macromodel is established for interpreting all the experiences and occurrences in the world, the most consistent and comprehensive way that the micromodels are fitted into it is the indication of truth. On the one hand, systematic consistency is inadequate to test *between* divergent systems since they all may be systematically consistent within themselves. But, on the other hand, systematic consistency is eminently qualified to test for truth *within* a system; that is what the system is all about. Anything not systematically related cannot be a truth within that system. Likewise, any fact unaccounted for in a system that claims to account for *all* facts stands against the truth of that system. A worldview model must be both consistent and comprehensive. Whatever best fits within its overall interpretive framework is to be taken as true, and whatever does not fit is to be taken as false.

The Systematic Coherence Test: Probability

It must be admitted that systematic consistency does not provide an apodictic or undeniable test for truth. For one thing, no finite mind is in actual possession of *all* the facts. Further, no finite person is able to comprehend completely *all the facts*. Also, finite minds have difficulty in understanding the consistency and inconsistency between all the facts. For these reasons, absolute certitude will be difficult, if not impossible, for every opposing truth claim made within a given worldview. As in almost everything else in life, probability is the guide. However, in some cases of high probability one may reach a level of moral certitude in which, while other views are logically possible, there are no known reasons to veto the acceptance of the truth claim being adopted.

In the case of systematic consistency within an established worldview, whichever conclusions *best* fit all the known facts and is the *most* consistent will be considered true. Of course, the major apologetic problems of defending Christianity are resolved when one establishes the metaphysical

view within which the facts are to be interpreted. If theism can be established undeniably as the model, then pantheism, naturalism, and panentheism are thereby eliminated. This will be the aim of part 2 of this book. The remaining choices are largely among competing theisms, as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. The adjudication of truth claims among these, then, will not be a purely philosophical enterprise. Here the probability of historical and evidential arguments will be decisive. If Christianity best explains all the known facts in the most consistent way, then it should be accepted as truth. Part 3 of this book will be an attempt to argue that this is indeed the case.

Summary and Conclusion

The first seven chapters attempted to show that skepticism and agnosticism are self-defeating and the major traditional methods are inadequate to test the truth of a worldview. Another test was offered in this chapter—namely, actual undeniability. If we can establish that all nontheistic views engage in self-defeating statements germane to those views, then we can reject them as false. If we can show that theism is the only affirmable view or that it is undeniable, then it will be established as true.

Once this is established to be a theistic universe, whichever form of theism can be demonstrated to best explain all known facts in the most consistent way will be the true theistic view. It is the contention of this work (in part 3) that evangelical Christian theism qualifies as the most systematically coherent theistic view on all three tests: consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance.

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THEISTIC APOLOGETICS

There are a limited number of mutually exclusive ways to view the whole of reality. The ensuing chapters will review these different metaphysical systems. The purpose will be to show that all the major alternative worldviews are self-defeating and inadequate and that only theism stands the test for truth laid down in the last chapter of part 1 (chap. 8). Theism is the belief that there is a God both *beyond* and *within* the world, a Creator and Sustainer who sovereignly controls the world and supernaturally intervenes in it.

Deism holds with theism that God created the world but denies God's supernatural intervention in it on the grounds that the world operates by natural and self-sustaining laws of the Creator. In short, God is *beyond* the world but is not active in the world in a supernatural way.

Pantheism holds that God is *identical* with the real world. God is all and all is God. God does not transcend reality but is immanent in reality, or rather, all reality is in God. Beyond God is only illusion or nonreality.

Panentheism or finite godism (or dipolar theism) contends that God is *in* all the world; the world is the "body" of God. God in his actuality is commensurate with the changing world of our experience; only God's potentiality transcends the world. In brief, God is to the world as the mind is to the body.

Finite godism holds that the god who exists beyond the world is limited in power and/or perfection. God created (or formed) the world but does not have complete control over it.

Atheism, of course, denies that there is a God in any of the above senses either *in* or *beyond* the world. It affirms that no God exists. The world (universe) is all there is. Only nature exists; there is no supernatural realm.

Polytheism, the belief that there are many gods within the universe, is a philosophical worldview. It denies monotheism (only one infinite God exists) and opts for many gods. Some polytheists affirm that there is one chief god among the many (like Zeus). This is called henotheism.

9
Deism

Exposition of the Deistic Worldview

Deism is not presently a major worldview, but its significance is both historic and lasting. The deistic movement arose during the seventeenth century and flourished in the eighteenth but largely died out by the nineteenth century. It represents, however, one of the major metaphysical positions about reality that conflicts with theism.

The Roots of Deism

Insofar as deism engaged in a negative destructive criticism of both supernatural revelations and miracles, it sprang from the ancient pagan writers like Celsus and Porphyry. Insofar as it was hostile to Christianity, it was a reaction against an overemphasis on doctrine and ritual at the expense of ethical considerations. But as a philosophical movement, deism borrowed the theistic concept of God and understood it in terms of the mechanistic model (e.g., watchmaker) of the new scientific outlook springing from Francis Bacon and others. Many other roots of deism have been noted by historians, including the Renaissance, the study of comparative religions, the discovery of non-Christian tribes, the increase of human inventions, a resurgence of gnostic pride of intellect, the revival of the allegorical method of interpreting the Bible (from Origen, a third-century church father), and the influence of ancient naturalism and skepticism from the Stoics and skeptics.

Along the way there were many philosophical figures who may not technically qualify as deists but who nonetheless gave impetus to and provided arguments for the movement. Bacon's scientific approach, John Locke's empiricism, and David Hume's skepticism about miracles definitively aided the deistic cause. The specific contributions of these influences will be pinpointed in subsequent analysis. In short, the strains in philosophy that tended either to naturalism or antisupernaturalism, that stressed the scientific processes, and that glorified the natural creation without vilifying the Creator were influential or helpful to deism.

The Rise of Deism

There are numerous theological antecedents of deism including Pelagianism, Socinianism, and Arianism. In these systems humanity's perfectibility was stressed, the Trinity denied for God's unity, and Christ's deity diminished or denied completely.

Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648): "The Father of English Deism." Incongruously, deism, a movement that denies supernatural acts of God in the world, originated in England with a man who claimed that a supernatural sound convinced him that he should publish his work. His subsequent book, *De Veritate* (*On Truth*) (1624), signaled the beginning of deism in England.[207]

Herbert set forth five principles of religion he believed were common to all humans:

1. That there is one supreme God.
2. That that God ought to be worshiped.
3. That virtue and piety are the chief parts of divine worship.
4. That we ought to be sorry for our sins and repent of them.
5. That divine goodness dispenses rewards and punishments both in this life and after it.[208]

Herbert maintained that these five principles are innate truths that are both universal and certain and are obtained by reflection. He declared himself happier than Archimedes on discovering these principles. Although later deists expanded this list, and some omitted principle 5 or sometimes principle 4, in general these five became a kind of creed for deism.[209]

In maintaining the first article, Herbert denied that there were any atheists, although he readily admitted that many held unworthy concepts of deity. Since most men of his day would grant the truth of principle 2, Herbert did not labor the point. In connection with principle 3, Herbert stressed the ethical character of natural religion vis-à-vis the sacramental and ritualistic modes of the established church. Here the deistic anticlerical emphasis was marked. Principle 4 presented Herbert an opportunity to stress the universality of salvation against the narrow ceremonial way provided in the church. Principle 5 implied a belief in the immortality of the soul, the providence of God, and the final day of reckoning after death. Of these principles he wrote: "Yet the five above-mentioned truths ever were, and always will be, of that divine nature, that like sunbeams, which no weight can depress, nor any wind blow out, they have darted their glorious rays into the minds of men in all parts of the earth, where they did but exercise their natural use of reason."[210]

Herbert, like other deists to follow, had a definitely negative side to his deism. But since he lived in a time that lacked religious toleration, his criticisms of the Bible were couched in attacks on heathen religious books, sacrifices, and miracles. He made it plain that special supernatural revelation is unnecessary and that the five principles are sufficient for universal salvation as well as for the harmony and peace of humanity. His conditions for believing that any book was inspired were worded in such a way as to lead one to believe that he felt no book would qualify as a revelation.[211]

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679): Deistic Materialism. It is difficult to determine whether Hobbes was a deist, a theist, or even an atheist. Like others in that day of religious intolerance, his true views may be concealed beneath his overt claims. At any rate, he had many deistic beliefs, though his views were materialistic. He was a sensationalist in his epistemology and a materialist in his metaphysics. In his famous *Leviathan* (1668) Hobbes reduces all ideas to sensation, and since everything a human imagines is finite, he contends that there is no positive knowledge of an infinite God. In this the schoolmen (Scholastic philosophers) deceive us, Hobbes argues, for we cannot conceive God. The name of God is invoked only to induce worship, not because we can conceive him.[212]

Religion, according to Hobbes, is peculiar to humanity because the human is the only animal that seeks the causes of things. Since anxiety follows from not knowing the cause of what we cannot control, we posit an invincible power we call God. Those who press for causes of natural bodies arrive finally at one God. This God is not understood dogmatically; God is named or designated only for pious purposes. Humans worship this invincible Power as an expression of their thanks for the gifts the Power gives to them. There are four natural seeds of religion. The belief in God arises out of (1) opinions about ghosts, (2) ignorance of the cause of things in the natural world, (3) the tendency of humans for devotion toward what they fear, and (4) belief in conjectures made about the future based on the opinion of others.[213]

Besides these natural causes of religion, Hobbes recognizes the use of religion as a political force for inducing obedience, laws, peace, charity, and social justice. Kings stand in need of religion to rule their subjects. Hence, religion is a political instrument of the king to secure the monarchy against the beastly tendencies of humanity in a state of nature. In this regard, Hobbes, apparently with tongue in cheek, proceeds to make an exception for revealed religion over natural religion. Supernatural religion is confirmed by miracles, whereas natural religion is not. Hence, in theory at least, Christianity is superior to paganism. However, Hobbes contends that in actual practice, when a supposedly revealed religion propounds contradictions, fakes miracles, permits injustice and cruelty, enjoys luxury, and reaps self-benefit, it cannot be believed. Hobbes goes so far as to say that miracles even weaken one's faith, for when the miracles fail, so does the faith, as is evident in the life of Moses. Indeed, Hobbes desupernaturalized events in the Gospels, claiming that "the Scriptures by the Spirit of God in man mean a man's spirit, inclined to holiness." He added, "I see nothing at all in the Scripture, that requireth belief, that demoniacs were any other thing but madmen."[214] Roman Catholicism is definitely suspect to Hobbes, since it requires for salvation many things that work to its own favor.[215] In effect, therefore, what Hobbes gives with his right hand he takes away with his left. In view of this it would seem fair to interpret him not only as a nominal Christian but also as an actual deist or even a covert atheist. At any rate, his arguments gave support to the overall deistic cause.

John Locke (1632–1704): Empirical Influence on Deism. Locke was not a deist. In one respect his work is an answer to the deistic challenge of his day. However, Locke displayed some deistic affinities and, more important, laid down some empirical principles that changed the course of deism. In his *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) Locke affirmed his belief in the supernatural over against deism, but he agreed with the deist's unitarian view of God as opposed to the orthodox trinitarian view. Likewise, Locke denied the deity of Christ as did the deists.

More important to the future of deism, however, was Locke's empiricism. In his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) he argued that all humans are born a tabula rasa, a blank slate. There are no innate ideas, as both rationalists and deists had been saying. The proofs for this are as follows: (1) children are born without a storehouse of ideas and learn from experience; (2) where there is no experience of something, there is a corresponding lack of idea (e.g., those born blind do not have any visual ideas); (3) where there are different experiences, there are correspondingly different ideas; and (4) we have ideas in our mind of things that fit only one or more of our five senses, indicating that all these ideas come via the senses.[216] Both George Berkeley and David Hume also agreed with this empiricism. So strong was this movement among the practically minded English that it came to dominate the epistemological scene, influencing even the deists whose predecessors had held to innate ideas.

Charles Blount (1654–93): Rationalistic Antisupernaturalism. Blount was clearly a deist. He quotes freely from ancient and modern nontheists, including Porphyry, Seneca, Montaigne, Spinoza, and Hobbes. His *Religio Laici* (*Religion of the Laity*) (1683) suggests a heavy dependence on Herbert of Cherbury. He presents his deism in seven articles by adding two subdivisions to Herbert's five points. Revealing the influence of Locke, Blount wavers between holding these articles of faith to be innate and allowing that they may be acquired, saying, "I know not whether the idea of a God be innate or no, but I'm sure that it is very soon imprinted in the minds of men."[217]

Blount has a more pronounced negativism than his predecessors. His attacks on the Bible indicate the influence of both Hobbes and Spinoza. He casts serious doubt on the virgin birth of Christ and aspersions on the integrity of many biblical characters. He speaks of the fables of the Old Testament,

ridicules the story of the fall of Adam, and satirizes the story of the flood. Likewise, Blount criticizes the human-centered creation story in Genesis. In short, by stressing the parallel of biblical material to pagan literature he manages to cast substantial doubt on the divine authority and authenticity of Scripture, thus denying its supernatural claim.

The Flourishing of English Deism

Historians cite many reasons for the flowering of English deism. Undoubtedly freedom of the press (granted in 1695) and the growth of biblical criticism (via Hobbes and Spinoza) contributed greatly to its rapid growth. So did the empiricism of Locke and the new scientific spirit following Bacon. The first notable deist to manifest Locke's influence was John Toland.

John Toland (1670–1722). Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) is one of the most important works of the deistic movement. The first edition was published anonymously and was burned by the Irish parliament. Toland affixed both his name and an apology to the second edition, published in London (1702). Most of Toland's work was of a negative character, but he found occasion to state some positive religious beliefs that agreed in essence with Herbert's list. He affirmed his belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the doctrine of future rewards and punishment. He also implied agreement with the article that made religion essentially ethical.

Toland primarily exerted his energy in anticlerical, antiscriptural, and antimiraculous attacks on traditional Christianity. With regard to miracles he manifested the influence of Locke, who had defined miracles as "a sensible operation, which, being above the comprehension of the spectator, and in his opinion contrary to the established course of nature, is taken by him to be divine."[218] Miracles are the main proof of revelation, but revelations attested by miracles were limited to Christ and Moses. Toland's definition of miracles is even less supernaturalistic than Locke's. Miracles for Toland are events "exceeding all human Power" but that nevertheless are "produced according to the laws of nature, though above its ordinary operations."[219]

In like manner, Toland rejected as part of the nature of true Christianity anything that was mysterious—that is, that went beyond human reason. Hence, it was necessary for him to charge that numerous corruptions have occurred in Christianity and the Scriptures down through the centuries. He hints that Scripture should be allegorically interpreted to avoid these problems, but it was later deists who developed this position. Toland did, however, discredit the Christian canon of Scripture in his *Amyntor* (1699), implying that there were additional books attributed to Christ, that there was no fixed and accepted number of canonical books, and that no distinction was made between apocryphal and canonical books.

Another lasting effect of Toland was that made by way of Locke's empiricism. Toland rejected mystery because it has no empirical basis. All knowledge, he said, is based on ideas that come from the senses. Nothing is to be accepted as true unless there is exact correspondence between ideas and sensation. "Whatever is evidently repugnant to clear and distinct ideas, or to our common notions, is contrary to reason."[220] Anything mysterious or "beyond reason" is thereby eliminated, including the doctrine of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ involved in his deity.

In short, Toland's contributions to deism were to build it on the foundation of a Lockian empiricism, to criticize the canon of Scripture, and to emphasize antisupernatural and antimystery rationalism. Successors developed these strains of deism.

Anthony Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713). Shaftesbury claimed to hold orthodox views, but it is believed that he hid his real views for fear of persecution. He criticized the deists and

spoke of himself as a Christian, but this is understood by many to be a part of his characteristic method of satire and irony. Shortly after his death a work titled *The Cure of Deism* (1736) listed Shaftesbury and Tindal as the "oracles of Deism."[221] In view of his extensive criticism of the Bible, it seems likely that Shaftesbury should be classified among the deists.

Most of the basic tenets of deism laid down by Herbert are reflected by Shaftesbury in his work titled *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). He believed in God, a natural sense of right and wrong, the worship of God, the possibility of a future life, and the essential moral character of religion. His main contributions to deism, however, were not on the side of his positive beliefs. On the negative side, Shaftesbury showed a hostility to supernaturalism. He opposed using miracles to support Christianity. He rejected modern miracles, accepting biblical miracles in principle but according biblical miracles very little difference from other miracles. He ridiculed the Bible, especially Old Testament stories about Moses, Joshua, and Jonah, and also New Testament stories such as those of the birth of Christ and Pentecost.[222]

Anthony Collins (1676–1729). Deists abounded in eighteenth-century England when Collins published *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* (1713) and *A Discourse on the Ground and Reason of the Christian Religion* (1724). In the former work he added a number of new arguments against Christianity as a revealed religion. He reasoned that a book that came from God would be expected to be more exact and better written than the Bible is. He capitalized on different interpretations and differing canons of Scripture among the Christian sects. He cast doubt on the reliability of the Bible by paralleling its miracles to pagan wonder stories.

Collins's other important work sought to weaken the credibility of Scripture by dwelling on the charge of pious frauds and the gullibility of early Christians. He maintained that the Old Testament text is badly corrupted. He denied that the prophecies of the Old Testament were literal, hence they could not be used as a supernatural confirmation of Christianity. This he maintained by means of an allegorical interpretation of Scripture adopted from Origen.[223] In support of his position Collins pointed out that both Celsus and Porphyry accused the early Christians of so interpreting Scripture as to make it appear as though the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament. Collins likewise cast doubt on the actions of Jesus and the New Testament apostles by suggesting that they were merely following pagan practices in claiming fulfillment of prophecy. The doctrine of the virgin birth was given special treatment in this regard.

Collins also argued against atheism. He agreed with most of Herbert's five principles, dropping only the one on the immortality of the soul. Others were not mentioned at all but may be implied to some degree. Collins's work does manifest a more intense criticism of Christianity than did Herbert's work, and a tendency toward even greater skepticism. His works stirred dozens of replies by Christian apologists, including the notable rebuttal by Richard Bentley, *A Confutation of Atheism* (1692).

William Wollaston (1659–1724). Other deists such as Bernard de Mandeville (1670–1733) continued the negative attack.[224] But one of the more popular books to come from a deist was William Wollaston's *Religion of Nature Delineated* (1722). By 1746 this book had gone through seven editions. Wollaston worked out a naturalistic system of ethics that included belief in God, the immortality of the soul, and rewards and punishment whereby everyone can receive his or her due for this life. He also argued that since not all creatures get more pleasure than pain in this life, there must be another life to rectify this situation, for a just God must certainly give his creatures more pleasure than pain. In contrast with the more optimistic tone of other deists, Wollaston indicated a rather gloomy and pessimistic view of humanity's life on earth.

Thomas Woolston (1670–1733). Thomas Woolston was perhaps the most prolific and piercing of deistic writers. His attacks were vigorous and coarse. The deistic critic John Leland charged him with "scurrilous buffoonery and gross raillery."[225] Woolston's attacks on the clergy were relentless, as is manifest in *The Moderator between an Infidel and an Apostate* (1721) and his *Free Gifts to the Clergy* (1723–24). He speaks of them as being "hired" and full of "greed" in their defense of Christianity. Woolston's primary contribution to deism was his discussion of miracles in six *Discourses on Miracles* (1727–30). In this work he charged that there were pagan parallels and even pagan origins of biblical miracles. In the course of criticizing Christ's miracles Woolston found occasion to declare that Christ was not even a good man—a belief that was reflected later by Bertrand Russell.

Matthew Tindal (1657–1733). Tindal is probably the most representative example of English deism. His major work, titled *Christianity as Old as the Creation; or, The Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1730), has been called the "deistic Bible," and its author the "apostle of deism." It called forth 150 replies, including Joseph Butler's classic critique of deism, *Analogy of Religion* (1736). The central argument of Tindal's work is based in the nature of God. God is perfect, and therefore the religion he gives to humanity must be perfect and incapable of being improved. Creation alone and not the Bible fits this description. Hence, no later revelation such as the Bible can possibly improve on God's natural revelation. And since God is immutable, he cannot change the religion he gave in the first place. Further, because God is impartial, he would not have specially favored one people over another by a special revelation to them. From God's justice Tindal argued that God "at all times has given mankind sufficient means of knowing what he requires of them."[226] From the perfection of the first revelation in creation he drew the conclusion that any later revelation can be at best a republication of this original revelation and must be identical with it in content.

Anticipating the question, Why republish the creative revelation in a book? Tindal replied that revealed religion is given only to liberate humanity from the load of superstition that has been mixed with natural religion. But since the Bible is untrustworthy and full of errors, it is obvious that it would not qualify under Tindal's criteria as special revelation. In this regard the title of Tindal's book has been criticized as misleading.

The articles of natural religion given by Tindal are as follows: (1) belief in God, (2) the worship of God, (3) doing what is for one's own good or happiness, and (4) promoting the common happiness. Elsewhere Tindal indicates his belief in a future life.[227] But with regard to belief in the Bible as a special revelation of God, Tindal left little hope. For him the gospel could not be more plain than reason, and even so it must be interpreted by reason and not vice versa. Furthermore, a written revelation depends on the uncertain meaning of words, and there is the further problem of the uncertain transmission of the Bible with the consequent corruption of the text.

Tindal's attack on miracles was based on the many parallels found in pagan stories. He quotes with apparent approval the old statement, "Miracles for fools, the reasons for wise men."[228] The fall of man, many Old Testament stories, the doctrine of original sin, and the integrity of the biblical prophets are all challenged by Tindal. He vigorously presented the disagreement between science and Scripture, using the former to discredit the latter. His work represented the high tide of deism and called forth Christianity's most able defenders. There were other deists after Tindal, such as Thomas Morgan (d. 1743), but none were able to reach his stature.

The Decline of Deism

Numerous factors contributed to the demise of deism, including the apologetic defense of Christianity provided by men like Thomas Bentley, William Paley, and Bishop Joseph Butler.[229] There were also the internal conflicts within the deistic movement and the tendency of English empiricism toward skepticism. No doubt England's political preoccupation with issues of national importance and the exhaustion of the subject also contributed to the death of deism. But whatever the factors, the period of decline produced the most negative and skeptical forms of deism in its history.

Peter Annet (1693–1769). One of the strongest cases against miracles was presented by Peter Annet in *The Resurrection of Jesus Considered* (1744). In this work the author attacks the trustworthiness of the records of Jesus's resurrection as well as the character of the evidence presented in them. Not only are miracles unnecessary, he argues, but the changeless character of God and the uniformity of natural law also rule out miracles. He wrote, "Natural powers are fit to answer all the ends of virtue and religion; therefore supernatural powers are needless."[230] From the very moment of creation God instituted the law of nature to operate in a uniform way. And since no improvement can be made on God's creation and no change can occur in his nature, miracles are both unnecessary and actually impossible. His argument in this regard foreshadows Hume's extreme skepticism on miracles.

Annet also attacked the canon of Scripture and the lives of biblical figures, as had other deists before him. But his most significant contribution was in the direction of the rigidifying naturalism that had developed within the logic of deism.

Thomas Chubb (1679–1747). Chubb had little education but possessed some natural ability, which he used to present deism in ordinary language. His work *The True Gospel of Jesus Christ Asserted* (1739) is largely repetition of what his predecessors had already said. The author believed in God, in a moral law according to which humans live acceptably before God, and that repentance and reformation are the way back to God. But he acknowledged that the content of natural revelation was more scant. Most of the rest of Chubb's writings are negative. He bitterly criticized parts of the Old Testament such as the slaughter of the Canaanites and what he called "malevolent" psalms.[231] He accused the apostles of being hypocrites and spoke contemptuously of Christ and his miracles. He rejected both prophecy and miracles as proof of divine revelation. Chubb not only confessed himself to be a deist but also claimed Jesus as an ally. Chubb's writing was both clever and forceful, and it was influential among the unlettered populace.

Henry Bolingbroke (1678–1751). Lord Bolingbroke, like other, later deists, was not original, but his brilliant mind and literary ability added to the influence of his works. While some deists were already tending to skepticism, Bolingbroke created a late splash in the English deistic movement. His use of mockery was extensive, and his outlook was generally gloomy. Other than his belief in God based on reason and occasional reference to some other deistic tenets, his work is mostly negative. He doubted a future life and denied any future punishment.[232]

Bolingbroke accused the authors and transmitters of the Bible of being selfish frauds and declared the biblical history to be untrustworthy. Based on the new scientific outlook of thinkers like Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton, he rejected the biblical picture of the world. He attacked the stories of creation and the flood and the doctrine of inspiration. People who thought themselves inspired he called mad and irrational. Bolingbroke attacked Christianity on philosophical as well as historical grounds. He considered the patronizing of Christianity particularly distasteful. And, contrary to traditional Christian belief, he argued for the materiality of the soul.[233] Bolingbroke quoted widely from the church fathers (mostly negatively) and often from skeptics and other deists.

Conyers Middleton (1683–1750). Middleton's contribution to deism was largely in the realm of the antisupernatural argumentation. His *Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, Which Are Supposed to Have Subsisted in the Christian Church* (1749) rejects all miracles after the time of the apostles. Middleton considered apostolic miracles authentic, however, for these were "delivered to us by eye-witnesses, whose honest characters exclude the suspicion of fraud, and whose knowledge of the facts, which they relate, scarce admits the probability of a mistake." In much the same vein as Locke's *Third Letter on Toleration*, Middleton contrasted with great scholarship the apostolic and postapostolic miracles. He strongly maintained the incredibility of the church fathers' witness to supposed miraculous events in much the same way that Hume and others cast doubt on all testimony to miracles. Middleton summarized his view by saying, "The History of the Gospel, I hope may be true, though the History of the Church be fabulous."[234] In this sense Middleton was only a limited deist or a qualified theist.

Henry Dodwell Jr. (d. 1784). In Henry Dodwell, skepticism reduced deism to a fideistic stance. In his book *Christianity Not Founded on Argument; and the True Principle of Gospel-Evidence Assigned* (1741), Dodwell states, "I am fully persuaded, that the judging at all of religious matters is not the proper province of reason, or indeed an affair where she has any concern." Reason by its very nature cannot be the faculty of religion; faith is essential to religion. Religion requires humans to think alike, whereas people differ in their thinking. Religion teaches people to pray for an increase of faith, whereas reason calls for an increase in evidence. Reason calls for neutrality and withholding decision, whereas religion demands faith. Indeed most humans are capable of little reasoning, but all have faith readily available. The command to believe makes no time allowance for the reasoning process. The Bible itself does not teach people to reason but to believe. Not even miracles can be appealed to as reasons for belief because counterfeit miracles are possible. And even if some apostolic miracles are regarded as reason for faith, they have lost their value by increasing antiquity. Indeed, faith and reason are contrary in nature and effect. "The foundation of philosophy is all doubt and suspicion, as the foundation of religion is all acquiescence and belief."[235] The world failed by wisdom to know God (1 Cor. 1:21). According to Dodwell, philosophical skepticism and religious deism go hand in hand, one complementing the other.

David Hume (1711–76). If his claim is taken at face value, David Hume sided more with the deist Cleanthes in his famous *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (1779). Most interpret him, however, as a tongue-in-cheek skeptic. Whatever the case, Hume's anti-Bible, antiestablished religion, and especially antimiracles emphasis make it easy to see why many people of Hume's day thought him to be a deist.

Hume did make statements to the effect that he believed in God apart from any divine revelation. In the introduction to his *Dialogues* Hume wrote, "What truth is so obvious, so certain, as the *being* of a God, which the most ignorant ages have acknowledged, for which the most refined geniuses have ambitiously striven to produce new proofs and arguments?" What Hume did claim to dispute was "the *nature* of that divine being; his attributes, his decrees, his plan of providence." In the *Dialogues*, Demea is the mystic, Philo the skeptic, and Cleanthes the believer in God. Hume concludes in the last lines, "I confess that, upon a serious review of the whole, I cannot but think that Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's; but that those of Cleanthes approach still nearer to the truth." Prima facie, then, Hume would appear to be a deist. Whether this was a covert literary way of hiding his true skepticism is moot. Hume did say, a few lines earlier, that "to be a philosophical skeptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian."[236] This sounds like fideism.

However one interprets Hume's own personal views concerning God, in two definite ways Hume is associated with the deistic movement, especially in its period of decline. First, the deism of Hume's day had become increasingly skeptical about rational demonstrations of religious truths. Second, Hume's extremely naturalistic stand against miracles is the climax of a characteristic tendency in the deistic movement. Hume argued strongly that wise persons should not believe in miracles because the probability for the uniformity of nature was always higher than the probability of an exception to the laws of nature. Since wise persons base their beliefs on the highest probability, they will always believe a miracle to be highly improbable. In short, the testimony for the uniformity of nature is built on the highest probability; hence, a miraculous event must always be most highly suspect (see chap. 16 on naturalism).

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). Kant confesses to having been awakened from his dogmatic slumbers by reading David Hume. This awakening turned him from rational theism to philosophical skepticism. Kant retained his personal piety and interest in religion but strictly on moral grounds. He believed, as the title of his deistic classic reveals, in "religion within the limits of reason alone" (1792). By "reason" Kant means practical or moral reason, since he gave up theoretical or philosophical reason in his famous *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).

Not only did Kant reject all rational proofs for the existence of God in favor of his moral postulate, but he also rejected the need for historical evidence, especially by way of the miraculous. Miracles are superfluous to true religion. Miracles may be appropriate to humanity's ordinary way of thought, to introduce moral religion, but they are not strictly necessary to religion. Although a person cannot deny the theoretical possibility of a miracle occurring, it is senseless deceit on a human's part to believe that he or she has the gift of performing them. Kant admits that Christ's life and death may "all be nothing but miracles. . . . But it is essential that, in the use of these historical accounts, we do not make it a tenet of religion that the knowing, believing, and professing of them are themselves means whereby we can render ourselves well-pleasing to God." The account of Christ's resurrection, however, is clearly rejected by Kant. These "more secret records, added as a sequel, of his *resurrection* and *ascension*, which took place before the eyes only of his intimates, cannot be used in the interest of religion within the limits of reason alone."[237]

Kant defined miracles as "events in the world the *operating laws* of whose causes are, and must remain, absolutely unknown to us." Hence, "we have not, and can never hope to have, the slightest conception of the law according to which God then brings about such an event." Indeed, "we cannot know anything at all about supernatural aid." One thing we do know about a miracle is that "if it flatly contradicts morality, it cannot, despite all appearances, be of God (for example, were a father ordered to kill his son . . .)." In contrast to Hume, for Kant it was uniform accord with the moral law rather than with natural law that was the criterion by which alleged miraculous events were to be judged. Kant did accept, nonetheless, that all the species and events of the plant and animal kingdoms are "nothing but natural effects and *ought* never to be adjudged otherwise." Only the rash and immodest would venture beyond natural explanation in support of miracles.[238]

Although Kant admits the theoretical possibility of miracles, he both denies their moral relevance to religion and offers this practical argument against them: either miracles occur *daily*, hidden under the guise of natural events, or else they occur *seldom*, or else they *never occur*. On the one hand, if they occur regularly, then they could not be accounted as miracles but must simply be natural events. On the other hand, if miracles occur only seldom, then the objective question can be transformed into a frivolous subjective question by asking, How seldom? Once in a hundred years? Or in ancient times but never now? But since practical reason must operate by objective principles, we must conclude

that miracles must occur either daily or *never*. And since they cannot occur daily, "nothing remains but to adopt the latter maxim—for this principle remains ever a mere maxim for making judgments, not a theoretical assertion." In short, Kant admits that miracles are theoretically possible, but he will live as though they never occur. Since miracles are morally unnecessary, it will be morally assumed that religion can be lived within the limits of reason alone, without appeal to the supernatural. The supernatural may be there, and miracles may even occur, but they are unknowable by nature and impractical—even embarrassing—for religion. Hence, it is morally best to simply eliminate the miraculous from religion. Our practical reason demands this nonsupernatural approach.[239]

Other Deistic Influence of Note

English deism strongly influenced later French deism and skepticism, of which Denis Diderot and Voltaire are notable examples. In America deism flourished after it had declined in England. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine are classed as deists. Jefferson cut all the miraculous stories out of the Gospels and put the rest together in a form that was published posthumously. His "Bible" ends this way: "There laid they Jesus, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed."[240] Since the rest of the story is the miracle of the resurrection, Jefferson omitted it. Paine is notorious for his attack on the Bible in *The Age of Reason* (1794–95). Perhaps more than anywhere else in the United States, deistic tendencies of naturalism and biblical criticism have lived on in modernistic or liberal Protestantism. Harry Emerson Fosdick is no doubt the classic representative of this position, but other modern exponents, such as Nels Ferré, have carried on the spirit of the movement. And in many respects contemporary process theology (see chap. 12) carries on the naturalistic deistic tradition.

Historians have listed many reasons for the decline and fall of deism. The high scholarship of its opponents, the internal problems of the deistic view, the increasing skepticism of the period, deism's mechanistic model of God, its lopsided criticism of biblical characters, and even the shifting political scene have been given as reasons for the demise of deism. But before we provide a philosophical critique of deism, it is necessary to outline the central tenets of the deistic worldview.

The Central Tenets of Deism

The foregoing survey of deism amply indicates the diversity within the deistic movement. There are few if any hard-and-fast lines of demarcation. The movement fades off on a continuum from qualified theists (e.g., Locke) to those whom some consider to be outright skeptics (e.g., Hume). In between, the grounds for holding to deism vary from rationalism to fideism. Likewise, the degree of and basis for skepticism on miracles ranges from accepting only apostolic miracles to the rejection of all miracles, from rejecting miracles in practice to rejecting all miracles in principle.

For systematic purposes we will have to ignore the historical shades and overlappings with theism and skepticism, and describe a deistic position that is mutually exclusive of both supernatural theism and to pure naturalism. In this regard, a deist will be defined as one who believes that there is a God beyond the world who created the world but that the world runs by natural law without supernatural interference. Deists will differ as to why they reject miracles. Some will say God *cannot* perform them because it would be contrary either to his own nature or to the nature of natural law. Others will simply point out that God *does not* perform miracles, at least that we have no convincing evidence

that he has done so. They agree that miracles are not needed to support religion; a natural basis is sufficient for a natural religion. Following are the central tenets of deism in order of importance.

1. There is a God who created the universe. In contrast to dualism, which holds that matter is eternal, the deists believe that the material universe was created by God. God alone is eternal. And in contrast with pure naturalists and atheists, a deist believes that it is necessary to posit a God as the author and architect of the universe. There is a First Cause beyond the natural world who originated all of the natural processes. Likewise, in distinction from pantheists, a deist believes that God is not identical with the real world. All is not God and God is not all for a deist. The world is as different from God as the painting is from the painter or the watch from the watchmaker. Of course, the mind of the Maker is revealed and manifest in what is made, but there is nonetheless a real difference between Creator and creation.

2. Miracles do not occur. Some argue that a perfect God could not make an imperfect universe, such as one that demands miraculous interruption and repair. This would be contrary to the nature of God. Others stress the unchanging nature of God. If miracles were unnecessary from the beginning of natural creation, then there is no reason to believe that a changeless God would change his mind about their subsequent usefulness. Other deists stress the uniformity of natural law. God set up the laws of the natural world, and he cannot (or will not) violate the law he established in the natural world. A miracle would be a violation of an inviolable law. But the inviolable cannot be violated. Hence, miracles cannot happen. In the weaker form of deistic antisupernaturalism, extreme skepticism is expressed about the actuality of any miracle occurring. Doubt arises either because of the unreliability of the witnesses, the inutility of miracles, the inauthenticity of the documents, or the general antiquity and inaccessibility of the evidence. And even some limited-supernatural theists, who admitted some miracles (usually apostolic ones), so undermined belief in other miracles that if their arguments were applied to apostolic miracles the grounds for believing in all miracles would be eliminated. Antisupernaturalism is a distinguishing characteristic of deism.

3. God is unitary, and the orthodox doctrines of the Trinity and the deity of Christ are to be rejected. In this respect even Locke was a deist, although he admitted the validity of apostolic miracles. This third tenet is consistent with the first premise and flows necessarily from the second. If no supernatural event occurs, then assuredly Christ was not a supernatural being, and he was definitely not Deity incarnate. And a denial of the deity of Christ involves a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, which holds that there are more persons than one who are God by nature, one of whom is Jesus of Nazareth. Deists, then, are unitarian in the doctrine of God.

Deism, of course, had many other associated tenets. Being a natural religion, it scoffed at all supposed supernatural revelation, as well as at established religions whose demands went beyond the natural revelation of God. And the minimal content of the natural revelation most often included a belief in a moral law, the good life in accord with this natural moral law, and a future life of rewards or punishments to follow. The three tenets of deism expounded above, however, are the major ones and will be the basis of our evaluation here.

An Evaluation of Deism

A number of positive and negative values emerge from a deistic emphasis, some directly and others as by-products. Let us note the more important ones.

Some Positive Contributions or Consequences of Deism

1. Deists emphasized natural revelation. In accord with traditional Christian theism, deists believed in a natural revelation of God to all humanity. From Old Testament times (Ps. 19) to the New Testament (Rom. 1:19–20), from Augustine to Aquinas to Calvin, theists have always acknowledged that God is revealed in his creation. All people know God via conscience and creation and are held responsible for this knowledge. No rational moral creature is beyond this natural revelation. Humans may and do distort and suppress it, but they are nonetheless aware of it. And indeed, the natural revelation is logically prior to any supernatural revelation, for how could one know something to be a special revelation of God if one had no general context in which to place it? How could one even know that it was God giving the special revelation unless one had some prior knowledge as to who God is? The God of creation (Gen. 1:1) comes both logically and actually prior to the God of supernatural revelation (Heb. 1:1–2).

2. Deism stressed reason in matters of religious belief. Most deists were not fideists; they believed that supposed miracles and revelations should be brought before the bar of reason to separate the false from the true. In this they should not be faulted. As many orthodox theologians have rightly argued, reason must be used to judge whether the Scriptures are a revelation of God. This does not mean that reason is superior to God, for God is the source of reason and of the principles of reason—such as the law of noncontradiction. And if a supposed revelation is logically contradictory, then there is no way it can be the object of a reasonable belief such as the Scriptures command Christians to have (1 Pet. 3:15). Deists should not be faulted, then, for using reason to judge revelation or miracles, but for misusing reason and for being unreasonable in its use.

3. The deistic attitude toward miracles is not without some justification, even though it is not entirely in accord with an authentic supernaturalism. The theist can readily admit that reason should be used to sort out false and spurious claims to the supernatural. Even Scripture commands believers to "test the spirits" and to beware of "false prophets" (1 John 4:1; Matt. 7:15 RSV). Indeed, if many miracles are found to be without justification because of lack of supporting evidence, then a true miracle is in a better position to be vindicated by its justifiable support. And if conflicting religious claims are supported by pseudo miracles, and if it is possible to support unique miracles that are without competitors, then such miracles will have a valid apologetic use. In short, deism's attack on spurious miracles is a helpful prelude to establishing Christian theism on authentic miracles.

4. Finally, an important by-product emerged from the strong and sustained attack on traditional Christianity. The deistic siege called forth some of the most scholarly and stout defenses of orthodox Christianity in modern times. George Berkeley, Joseph Butler, and William Paley all contributed masterful works to this apologetic cause. Even some skeptics, such as Lord Lytleton and Frank Morison, were converted and became ardent defenders of Christianity. Deistic criticism gave impetus to the study of archaeology, which yielded not only the conversion of such notable thinkers as biblical scholar William Ramsay but also hundreds of thousands of archaeological confirmations of the biblical worldview. For all of this, the bitter and sustained attack of deism on biblical Christianity is to be indirectly thanked.

A Negative Critique of the Deistic Worldview

As a worldview, deism suffers some insurmountable internal and even external difficulties. A summary of some of the most significant problems follows.

1. Deists' understanding of God is incompatible with their stand against miracles. Since God performed the miracle of creation ex nihilo (from nothing), it follows from the very nature and power of this kind of God that other lesser miracles are possible. Walking on water is little problem for a God who created water to begin with. To make a human through a female ovum (virgin birth) is not difficult for a God who made a world from nothing. And multiplying loaves is surely not a greater feat than creating matter in the first place. In short, it is self-defeating to admit the miracle of creation and to deny that other miracles are possible.

2. The deistic concept of God is built on an invalid mechanistic model rather than on a personal model. God is not a mere Master Machine-Maker. On this model it is no wonder deists conclude that a "perfect" creation would be one that does not demand personal attention and miraculous intercommunication. The more perfect the mechanic, the more perfect the machine, and the most perfect mechanic could create the most perfect machine, which should need no subsequent "tune-ups." However, if God is personal, as even the deistic concept of God would admit, then there is no reason why a "perfect" universe for a personal God would not be one that involves personal attention. Miraculous commerce between the personal Creator and the persons created would not only be possible; it would also seem to be most probable. If the desire to have personal communication between the supernatural and the natural realm flows from God as personal, then not to perform miracles of personal communication (i.e., revelation) would show God to be something less than perfectly personal. It is inconsistent to disallow a personal communication from the supernatural realm to the natural realm once one has admitted God is personal.

3. Deists are inconsistent in affirming God's originating cause of the universe and yet denying that God is the sustaining cause of the universe, for the very arguments used to prove the world needs a Creator (that are used by deists) begin with a temporal, finite, and contingent world. But if the world because of its dependence and contingency needed a Cause to begin with because it could not account for its own existence, then it must still need one to hold it in existence. After all, the world did not become a necessary being once God created it. And once a contingent being, always a contingent being, so the finite, contingent world needs a Sustainer now as it needed a Creator to begin with. The world did not cease being dependent on a Cause because it was created. If it was an effect when it was caused, then it is still an effect. And all effects need causes as long as they are effects. Indeed, this is precisely what the Bible declares about creation—namely, that Christ still "upholds the universe by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3) and that in Christ "all things hold together" right now (Col. 1:17). So Deism is inconsistent in denying the immanence of God in creation as its sustaining Cause in favor of His transcendence of creation as its originating Cause.

4. A God who is concerned enough to create humans in the beginning should be concerned enough to intervene on their behalf when they have fallen into grave difficulties. "You have made your own bed; lie in it" is something less than the attitude a good Creator ought to have. If God had enough love and concern for humanity to create them, then it would seem to be most compatible with such a nature to believe that God would miraculously intervene to help humans if they were in need. And surely a God strong enough to create the world is strong enough to help it. The laws of creation are not inviolable; they are created and contingent. And what is created and contingent can be laid aside if need be for the moral good of humanity. Hence, the nature of God, even as conceived by deists, would be compatible with miraculous intervention into the natural world when the situation calls for it.

5. The deistic arguments intended to eliminate the basis for belief in a supernatural revelation apply equally well to elimination of the deistic belief in creation. The deist has no more right to believe that God created the world from nothing than the supernaturalist has to believe that God has

performed miracles. If the Bible cannot be trusted to teach one doctrine, then there are no grounds for believing the other one is true. Both creation and revelation are miracles, and a miracle as such cannot be discovered by purely scientific or natural means. One cannot *prove* by reason the doctrine of ex nihilo creation, the attempts by some theists notwithstanding. That the originating Cause of the universe produced this world out of nothing is a supernatural act, and supernatural acts are not scientifically observable or demonstrable. One can see certain observable *results* of a supernatural act (e.g., a human body that results from a virgin birth), but one cannot observe the modus operandi by which the miracle occurred. Hence, deists defeat their own case against revelation when they accept from revelation the doctrine of creation.

6. Further, the deistic criticism of the trustworthiness of the biblical documents and writers is definitely lacking. Historical archaeological confirmation of the authenticity of Scripture has been overwhelming since the heyday of deism (see part 3 below). Thousands of finds have confirmed the picture of the biblical world presented in Scripture. The integrity of the eyewitnesses and writers of the documents of the New Testament has been sufficiently established. The alleged contradictions within the Bible have been answered.[241] No scientific errors have been proved in the Bible.[242] In short, deism has failed to cast sufficient doubt on the supernatural either in principle or in fact.

Summary and Conclusion

A deist believes that God made the world but does not "monkey" with it. He is its originating Cause but not its sustaining Cause. God created the natural world but never interrupts it with supernatural events. God is beyond the world but does not operate within it in a miraculous way. But despite the many helpful emphases and prods to biblical theism, the deistic position is decidedly inadequate. Once the miracle of creation is admitted, the possibility of other miracles follows. Indeed, the very concept of a deistic God is one that is not reducible to a purely mechanistic model that would allow for no personal intervention in the world. A personal God shows his perfection by his miraculous personal commerce with his creatures. To hold otherwise is inconsistent. And if God was concerned enough about humans to create them, it would seem to follow that he would be concerned enough to intervene on humanity's behalf. Indeed, there is ample evidence to believe that God has miraculously interposed himself in the world (see chap. 16). Deism is defunct both historically and philosophically.

Select Readings for Chapter 9

Exposition of Deism

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10
Finite Godism

Theism believes in an infinite God who is both beyond and in the world.[243] Finite godism, by contrast, holds that God is finite. Polytheism claims there are many finite gods.[244] Panentheism holds that God is finite but posits two poles to this God, one of which is identified with the physical universe.[245] All of these are mutually exclusive worldviews.

There were ancient Greek versions of a finite God, such as Plato's Demiurgos, who was coeternal with the world. But in the modern Western world most finite God views arise out of a theistic background. Generally speaking, many finite godists become such on attempting to reconcile their theistic tradition with the pervasive presence of evil.[246]

An Exposition of Finite Godism

There are many different possibilities for a finite god position, not all of which have well-known representatives. Such a God could be personal (as most hold) or impersonal, as Henry Wieman held.[247] The limitations on this God could be internal to the world, as John Stuart Mill believed, or external to it, as Plato affirmed. The limitations could be in his goodness but not his power, or in his power but not his goodness, as in Edgar Brightman and Peter Bertocci.[248] Or, God could be limited in both power and goodness (Mill and Rabbi Harold Kushner).

A finite God can have either one pole or two poles. Dipolar finite godism is known as panentheism.[249] Only monopolar examples are discussed here. Although many finite godists believe God is transcendent (beyond the universe), some have a finite God who is immanent (within the universe). Henri Bergson is an example of the latter view, holding that God is the vital force that drives the process of evolution onward.[250] This view is a precursor of panentheism, also known as process theology.

Plato's (ca. 427–ca. 347 BC) Finite Godism

Plato's Epistemology. Plato believed in innate ideas. Indeed, he believed these were the ideas that the mind beheld in the world of pure Forms before birth. The ideas were irreducibly simple eternal Forms (*Eidos*) that flowed from the one absolute Form, the Good (*Agathos*). Since they were beheld by the soul in a preincarnate state, all that was necessary was to recollect them. This was accomplished by a dialectical method of dialogue illustrated in *Meno*, when even a slave boy was able to do euclidean geometry by simply being asked the right questions. Of course, if someone does not get it right in this life, there is also another reincarnation. When one reasoned back to the foundation of thought, one found absolute first principles of knowledge that served as the foundation of all knowledge. Skepticism, agnosticism, and relativism are self-defeating.

Plato's Metaphysics. Plato believed that the universe is eternal, an eternal process by which the Creator (*Demiurgos*) beheld the Good (*Agathos*) and overflowed with Forms (*Eidos*), which informed the material world (Chaos)—forever forming it into a Cosmos. Creation, then, is an eternal process of *ex materia* (out of matter) creation. Thus reality is a basic dualism of Form and Matter, both being coeternal.

As Plato set forth in the famous cave analogy in his *Republic*,[251] the physical world is a world of shadows. The real world is the spiritual world of pure Forms. Each physical thing is structured or shaped by these Forms, or universals, as opposed to nominalism, which denies the reality of universals or essences. For example, all humans , according to Plato, share in the one Form or Essence of humanness. And humanness exists as a pure Form in the real world, the spiritual one behind this material world. And each of these pure Forms comes from the Form that contains all Forms in its absolutely perfect nature.

Plato's View of God. For Plato, God was not the absolute Form or Good (*Agathos*) but the Former (the *Demiurgos*). His argument for a Demiurgos (World Former) took the following form: (1) The cosmos, which is eternal, would be a chaos without forms. Pure stuff without structure is shapeless. (2) Chaos (formless matter) is not good, and cosmos (form) is good. (3) All forms of good in the world come from a Good Former beyond the world (chaos can't form itself into cosmos). (4) The Former can't make good forms without a Form of Good after which to pattern them. (5) The Form after which changing forms are formed must be an unchanging Form. Only the unchanging can be the basis of the changing. Only the Intelligible (Ideal) can be a basis for Ideas. (6) Therefore, there is both a Former (Demiurgos) and the Form (Good) after which all things are formed.

Several things emerge from this view. First, matter (the physical universe) is just as eternal as God is. God did not bring matter into existence ex nihilo (as in theism). Rather, God is simply forming the matter that has been there forever. Hence, God is not really the Creator, but only a Former.

Second, God is finite. There is stuff (matter) outside of God over which he has no ultimate control. This is a form of dualism in which two eternal principles are in conflict—the Formless (matter) and the Former (God). No ultimate outcome can be predicated on these premises.

Third, God is not ultimate. The Good (*Agathos*) is the ultimate to which even God (the Former) is subject. It is only when the Former beholds the Form that he is informed with Form that he can use to Form the Formless (chaos) outside himself.

Fourth, God (the Former) is not the ultimate object of admiration and contemplation. Rather, the Good is. So unlike later theists (e.g., Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas), the Greeks, such as Plato and Aristotle, never got the God and their ultimate metaphysical principle together.[252]

Fifth, all moral principles and values are derived ultimately from the Good, not from God. God wills a thing because it is good, based on something outside himself. It is not good, as in theism, because God wills it in accord with something in himself—his own unchangeably good nature.

John Stuart Mill's (1806–73) Finite Godism

John Stuart Mill embraced a finite god worldview. He is credited with laying down the rules for inductive scientific reasoning.[253] His work on probability was also formative of much later thought on the topic. It is from this vantage point that Mill approaches the question of God.

Mill's View of God. Mill rejected the traditional form of the teleological argument as expounded by William Paley, that as watches imply a watchmaker, even so a more complicated system like our world implies a World-Maker.

A Weak Teleological Argument. Mill reasoned that William Paley's argument is built on analogy, on the principle that similarity in effect implies similarity in cause. But this kind of analogy, he insisted, is weaker when the dissimilarities are greater than the similarities. And a significant dissimilarity weakens this argument, for watches imply watchmakers only because, by previous experience, we know that watches are made by watchmakers, not by anything intrinsic in the watch. In like manner, footprints imply humans, and dung implies animals, only because previous experience informs us that this is so, not because of any intrinsic design in the remains.

A Stronger Teleological Argument. After criticizing Paley's form of the teleological argument, Mill offered what he considered to be a stronger expression of it in his inductive "method of agreement." He began with the organic rather than the mechanical aspect of nature, arguing that (1) there is an amazing concurrence of many diverse elements in a human eye; (2) it is not probable that random selection brought these elements together; (3) the method of agreement argues for a common cause of the eye; (4) the cause was a final (purposing) cause, not an efficient (producing) cause; (5) but, Mill admitted, evolution, if true, diminishes the strength of even this stronger form of the teleological argument, for much of what appears to be design is accounted for in evolution by the survival of the fittest.

A Finite God. Mill's reasoning led him only to posit a finite God. In his own words: "A Being of great but limited power, how or by what limited we cannot even conjecture; of great, and perhaps unlimited intelligence, but perhaps, also, more narrowly limited than his power: who desires, and pays some regard to, the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for, and who can hardly be supposed to have created the universe for that purpose alone."[254]

In brief, God is limited in both power and goodness. We can infer from nature that God has benevolent feelings toward his creatures, "but to jump from this to the inference that his sole or chief purposes are those of benevolence, and that the single end and aim of Creation was the happiness of his creatures, is not only not justified by any evidence but is a conclusion in opposition to such evidence as we have." About the only legitimate inference we can draw from nature about God "is that he does not wish his work to perish as soon as created."[255]

Mill did not even see "how we can even satisfy ourselves on grounds of natural theology, that the Creator foresees all the future; that he foreknows all the effects that will issue from his own contrivances." So God is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. All the evidence shows an intelligence superior to human. The very fact that the Creator used contrivances—the adaptation of means to ends—indicates his limits, for "who would have recourse to means if to attain his end his mere word was sufficient? The very idea of means implies that the means have an efficacy which the direct action of the being who employs them has not."[256]

Only One Finite Creator. Even though Mill believed there could be other finite creators, he favored there being only one, because "every other theory of the government of the universe by supernatural beings, is inconsistent either with the carrying on of that government through a continual series of natural antecedents according to fixed laws, or with the interdependence of each of these series upon all the rest, which are the two most general results of science." Other than the general principles of design in nature, there is little indication of the Creator's benevolence, because "the end to which it is directed, and its adaptation to which end is the evidence of its being directed to an end at all, is not a moral end."[257]

The limitations of God are not external. That is, they are not due to the recalcitrance of the material with which he worked (which Plato held). Rather, "The limitation of his power more probably results

either from the qualities of the material—the substances and forces of which the universe is composed not admitting of any arrangements by which his purposes could be more completely fulfilled; or else, the purposes might have been more fully attained, but the Creator did not know how to do it."[258] In short, God is limited in himself, not simply by the world or by other beings.

Mill's View of Creation. The universe was not created out of nothing, according to Mill. "The indication given by such evidence as there is, points to the creation, not indeed of the universe, but of the present order of it by an Intelligent Mind, whose power over the materials was not absolute." Indeed, "there is in Nature no reason whatever to suppose that either Matter or Force, or any of their properties, were made by the Being who was the author . . . or that he has power to alter any of those properties."[259]

So matter and energy are eternal, and "out of these materials, he had to construct a world in which his designs should be carried into effect through given properties of Matter and Force, working together and fitting into one another."[260] Like Plato, Mill posited a finite God and eternal matter—a theistic dualism. Creation is not ex nihilo or *ex Deo* (out of God). Rather, it is *ex materia* (out of preexisting matter).

Mill's View of the Natural World. Mill believed in a material universe that he called "Nature." This "denotes the entire system of things with the aggregate of all their properties." Nature is "a collective name for all facts, actual and possible," or "the mode . . . in which all things take place." Since all things take place in a regular and uniform way, we can speak of the "laws of nature," such as Newton's law of gravitation. This is so because "all phenomena which have been sufficiently examined are found to take place with regularity, each having certain fixed conditions, positive and negative, on the occurrence of which it invariably happens." Because the operations of nature are uniform, "the progress of science mainly consists in ascertaining those conditions."[261]

Mill's View of Miracles. Mill held that although God is the author of nature's laws and could, by his will, intervene, there is no evidence that he does. Mill agrees that David Hume's argument against miracles leaves the impression "that the testimony of experience against miracles is undeviating and indubitable." Mill comes to the same antisupernatural conclusion as Hume, only by another route. Mill writes that "a new physical discovery even if it consists in the defeating of a well established law of nature, is but the discovery of another law previously unknown."[262]

So whatever new phenomenon is discovered "is found still to depend on law; it is always exactly reproduced when the same circumstances are repeated." But a miracle claims to supersede all natural laws, not just one natural law by another. However, "in the progress of science, all phenomena have been shown, by indisputable evidence, to be amenable to law, and even in the cases in which those laws have not yet been exactly ascertained, delay in ascertaining them is fully accounted for by the special difficulties of the subject."[263]

What is the basis for Mill's confidence that there is a natural explanation for all events? Following David Hume, Mill argued that "the commonest principles of sound judgment forbid us to suppose for any effect a cause of which we have absolutely no experience, unless all those of which we have experience are ascertained to be absent. Now there are few things of which we have more frequent experience than of physical facts which our knowledge does not enable us to account for."[264]

So "there is, in short, nothing to exclude the supposition that every alleged miracle was due to natural causes." And as long as that supposition is possible, "no man of ordinary practical judgment would assume by conjecture a cause which no reason existed for supposing to be real, save the necessity of accounting for something which is sufficiently accounted for without it."[265]

Miracles are not ruled out of hand as impossible by Mill. He admits that the existence of God makes them possible. "If we had the direct testimony of our senses to a supernatural fact, it might be as completely authenticated and made certain as any natural one. But we never have." So there is "a vast preponderance of probability against a miracle." From this, Mill drew the conclusion "that miracles have no claim whatever to the character of historical facts and are wholly invalid as evidences of any revelation."[266]

Mill's View of Evil. One of the most convincing evidences of God's finiteness to Mill was the presence of evil in the world. He concluded that "if the maker of the world can [do] all that he will, he wills misery, and there is no escape from the conclusion." He adds: "In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another, are nature's every day performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognized by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives; and in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow-creatures."[267]

Mill continues with a list of the horrible evils of nature. "Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed. All this, Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst."[268]

For Mill, all these evils are absolutely contradictory to an all-powerful, all-good Being. At best, there is only a partially good Deity with limited power.

Mill's View of Ethics. In the light of nature's gross evil, "the doctrine that man ought to follow nature, or in other words, ought to make the spontaneous course of things the model of his voluntary actions, is equally irrational and immoral."[269] How can we use nature as our norm when her actions are so evil? Our duty, then, is not to imitate nature but to strive to amend it.

Since Mill rejected the supernatural, he could not turn to revelation as a source of ethics. He believed "there is a very real evil consequence on ascribing a supernatural origin to the received maxims of morality."[270] Such ascription has the effect of consecrating imperfect rules and protecting them from all criticism. Having rejected absolutes, Mill devised the utilitarian calculus by which one is obligated to do what one believes will bring the greatest good to the greatest number of people in the long run. That is, we should so act as to bring "the greatest good (pleasure, happiness) to the greatest number of persons."[271] There are no absolute ethical norms. Even telling the truth is not an absolute, for "that even this rule, sacred as it is, admits of possible exceptions is acknowledged by all moralists." The best we can do is to build up from the fund of experience general rules that can guide us in deciding on the likely course to attain the end of the greatest good. But "the beliefs which have thus come down are the rules of morality for the multitude, and for the philosopher until he has succeeded in finding better."[272]

The Nature and Destiny of Humans . For Mill, the human is not simply material, but has a mind or soul. "There is, therefore, in science, no evidence against the immortality of the soul but that negative evidence, which consists in the absence of evidence in its favour. And even the negative evidence is not so strong as negative evidence often is." Nonetheless, Mill held that the belief that disembodied souls go about visibly or interfere in the events of life is disproved by the same weight of evidence that disproves witchcraft. "But that it does not exist elsewhere, there is absolutely no proof."[273]

However, Mill notes that there is no real scientific evidence for immortality either. The belief in it is based on mere hope. There is no real evidence either in the natural world or in the nature of God that warrants the inference that souls are immortal.[274] If there is a future life, it will simply be a continuation of the life we have on earth. To assume a radical break at death in the change of the mode of our existence is contrary to all analogies drawn from this life. If life continues, we must assume the same laws of nature will continue as well.

As for the belief in hell, Mill boldly protested, declaring: "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow creatures, and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go." Despite the lack of evidence for immortality, life here and now is worth living. And "the gain obtained in the increased inducement to cultivate the improvement of character up to the end of life, is obvious without being specified."[275]

Rabbi Kushner's (1935–) Finite Godism

A more recent and popular version of finite godism, especially as it responds to the problem of evil, is found in Rabbi Harold Kushner's best-selling book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (1981). He almost single-handedly brought finite godism back into fashion, at least on the popular level.

Kushner's View of God. According to Kushner, there is one God, who is limited in both power and perfection. But "when we speak of one God, are we doing something more than taking a census of how many divine beings there are? Are we perhaps saying that God 'has it all together' . . . ?"[276] Further, "because He is One, He is all alone unless and until there are other people to love Him."[277] This one God who made us is not all-powerful, for "He cannot monopolize all the Power and leave none for us."[278] Not only is God limited because of us, but he is also limited because of nature. As Kushner put it, "I recognize his limitations. He is limited in what he can do by the laws of nature and by the evolution of human nature and human moral freedom."[279] We must realize "that even God has a hard time keeping chaos in check and limiting the damage that evil can do."[280]

Kushner does not view this finite God as a liability but as an asset to our lives. "If we can bring ourselves to acknowledge that there are some things God does not control, many good things become possible." Indeed, "God, who neither causes nor prevents tragedies, helps by inspiring people to help." God cannot control the world and humans, but he "is the divine power urging them to grow, to reach, to dare."[281]

God, for Kushner, is more of a God of love than a God of power.[282] He is more kind than clever.[283] "God is the force that moves us to rise above selfishness and help our neighbors, even as he inspires them to transcend selfishness and help us."[284] As to our tragic circumstances, "God may not prevent the calamity, but He gives us the strength and the perseverance to overcome it."[285] God cannot ward off our misfortunes, but neither does he send them. "Our misfortunes are none of His doing, and so we can turn to Him for help."[286] Even during the Jewish Holocaust God "was with the victims, and not with the murderers, but . . . He does not control man's choosing between good and evil."[287]

Kushner's View of Humans. Mankind is part of "God's creation."[288] Each individual human is made in "God's image." This is especially manifest in the human ability to choose good and evil. Humans are also rational beings. "When the opening pages of the Bible describe Adam as naming the animals, tribute is being paid to his unique ability to reason, to sort things into categories. Man alone can use his mind to make tools . . . as well as to write books and symphonies."[289]

Humans have not only a mind and will but also real physical bodies. Hence, they can suffer and experience pain.[290] Nevertheless, the human body is good. For Kushner, "to view the human body and the whole natural world with disgust or mistrust is as much a heresy as to view it with unqualified reverence."[291] God is good, and God also made humanity good. When Adam and Eve, in the biblical account, took the fruit of the tree of knowledge, they did not fall downward; they "fell upward." It was a moment of progress for the human race, not of catastrophe. It was a leap forward in the evolutionary process.

Although Kushner speaks of "God's creation," he does not mean direct creation of living things and humans. He refers to the human mind as "the most indisputable proof of God's hand in the evolutionary process." Elsewhere he writes of "what God had in mind when He arranged for human beings to evolve."[292] So evolution[293] is the means through which God's creativity is expressed. Humanity is the highest product of that process—the creature most like God.

Kushner's View of the Natural World and Miracles. Even though the world is in the process of change, there are things about the world that even God cannot change. For example, we cannot "ask God to change laws of nature for our benefit, to make fatal conditions less fatal or to change the inexorable course of an illness."[294] Nature is impersonal. "The laws of nature do not make exceptions for nice people. A bullet has no conscience; neither does a malignant tumor or an automobile gone out of control."[295]

God's hands are tied by the unfeeling laws of nature. Thus we cannot ask God for a miracle. When highly unusual things do occur, "we would be well advised to bow our heads in thanks at the presence of a miracle, and not to think that our prayers, contributions or abstentions are what did it." Prayer does not put us in touch with a supernatural God. Rather, prayer puts "us in touch with other people, people who share the same concerns, values, dreams, and pains that we do."[296]

Not only is this world impersonal; in many respects it is also irrational.[297] That is, "the bad things that happen to us in our lives do not have a meaning when they happen to us."[298] There is no reason why some people suffer and not others. "These events do not reflect God's choice. They happen at random, and randomness is another name for chaos, in those corners of the universe where God's creative light has not yet penetrated."[299]

Kushner's View of Evil. Evil is real.[300] "To be alive is to feel pain, and to hide from pain is to make yourself less alive."[301] The world is unjust, and we must adjust to it. Rather than blaming God, *we need to forgive God*! In a poignant and revealing passage, the rabbi asks: "Are you capable of forgiving and loving God even when you have found out that He is not perfect, even when He has let you down and disappointed you by permitting bad luck and sickness and cruelty in His world, and permitting some of those things to happen to you? Can you learn to love and forgive Him despite His limitations . . . as you once learned to forgive and love your parents even though they were not as wise, as strong, or as perfect as you needed them to be?"[302] In short, the solution to the problem of evil in our lives is "to forgive God for not making a better world, to reach out to the people around us, and to go on living despite it all."[303]

Kushner's View of Ethics. Kushner's view of right and wrong is rooted in Jewish tradition, but blossoms in the sunlight of contemporary psychology. At times, he speaks of God as lawgiver. "He commands us. He imposes on us a sense of moral obligation."[304] God "commands us. That's what we're here on earth for, to be in God's service, to do God's bidding."[305]

Obedience to God's laws, however, is only a lower level of ethical activity. Following the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, Kushner believes that "obedience is not necessarily the highest virtue." Indeed, "a religion that defines morality as obedience to its commands is appropriate to children and

immature people, and may have been appropriate to humankind as a whole when civilization was immature."[306] However, being "'unquestioningly obedient' is a religion which would make perpetual children of us all."[307] A higher level of ethical maturity is achieved by those who "understand that rules don't come from 'on high.' Rules are made by people like themselves, tested and perfected over the course of time, and can be changed by people like themselves." At this stage, "being 'good' no longer means simply obeying rules. It now comes to mean sharing in the responsibility of evaluating and making rules which will be fair to all, so that we can all enjoy living in a fair and just society."[308]

Kushner's View of the Afterlife. As to life after death, Kushner is uncertain. Personal immortality is only a hope. "Neither I nor any living person can know anything about the reality of that hope."[309] He does "believe that the part of us which is not physical, the part we call soul or personality, does not and cannot die." But he adds, "I am not capable of imagining what a soul without a body looks like. Will we be able to recognize disembodied souls as being the people we had known and loved?"[310]

Kushner admits that "belief in a world to come can help people endure the unfairness of life in this world without losing faith. But it can also be an excuse for not being troubled or outraged by injustice around us, and not using our God-given intelligence to try to do something about it."[311] We should live for the short run, a moment at a time. "We never solve the problem of living once and for all."[312] The important thing is to live in the Now, moment by moment, and not for the Then.

We should not seek future rewards. "When you have learned how to live, life itself is the reward." Rabbi Kushner quotes approvingly the Talmud, which says, "One hour in this world is better than all eternity in the World to Come." When we speak of God in heaven as our hope, "we trivialize religion and make it harder for thoughtful people to take it seriously and find help there." Our real immortality is here on earth, to have children, to plant trees and gardens that others can enjoy long after we are gone.[313]

Heaven and hell[314] are right here on earth. Heaven "is having learned to do and enjoy the things that make us human, the things that only human beings can do." By contrast, "the worst kind of hell I can imagine is not fire and brimstone. . . . The worst hell is the realization that you could have been a real human being . . . and now it's too late."[315] God will not intervene someday to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. The real reward is that "He has made the human soul in such a way that only a life of goodness and honesty leaves us feeling spiritually healthy and human."[316]

Basic Tenets of Finite Godism

Not all finite godists agree on all points of their views about God and the world. We will stress the points most have in common, noting differences as they appear.

Finite Godism's View of God

The most fundamental characteristic of the finite God view is that God is limited in his very nature, either in power or in goodness or both. But virtually all agree that God is not infinite in power. Some, such as Plato, appeared to hold that God is limited in his power by the eternal world (which God did not create but was just there eternally along with God). This formless world places limits on God's ability to act within it. There is a dualism of Former (Demiurgos) and the Formless (chaos). Unlike in

theism, if God did not create the world and does not sustain its existence, then he cannot miraculously intervene in it or destroy it. In brief, a finite God is handicapped by a world he did not make and cannot control.

Finite Godism's View of Evil

In contrast to pantheists,[317] finite godists affirm that evil is real. The presence and power of evil places limits even on God. Evil is both physical and moral. The former is not always possible to avoid, but humans can do something about the latter. Cooperating with God's efforts for good (or even going beyond them if necessary) is part of our moral duty in the world.

There are various explanations for the origin of evil. Some finite godists say it was always there in some form.[318] Others attribute much of it to human free choices. But all agree that there is no sure guarantee that evil will ever be totally destroyed. They reason that if God were all-powerful, then he could destroy evil. And if God were all-good, then he would destroy it. But since evil is not destroyed there must not be an all-powerful and all-good God. In short, God must be finite in power or love or both.

Finite Godism's View of Creation

Following the Greek tradition, most finite godists have a dualistic view of God and the world. Thus they hold to creation *ex materia*—that is, out of preexisting eternal matter. In this view, God did not bring the world into existence; he merely formed the matter that was already there. In light of this, one of the limitations on God's power is external. Thus there is something about the extent and nature of matter over which even God has no ultimate control. He has no control *over* the universe. He simply has to work *with* the universe and do the best he can under the limitations it places on his creative powers. All finite godists agree on two basic things about creation: (1) it was not created *ex Deo* (out of God), as pantheists believe; and (2) God is limited either in or by his creation.

Finite Godism's View of the World

There are few things about the world on which all finite godists agree. All agree the world is there and that it runs in accordance with natural laws. But beyond this, there is no unanimity on whether it always existed and/or whether it always will exist. The nature of the world is viewed differently from one end of the mind-matter spectrum to the other. About the only other widely held view today is that the physical universe is not eternal or unlimited in energy. The universe is subject to the law of entropy, known as the second law of thermodynamics, and is running down.

Finite Godism's View of Miracles

Most finite godists reject miracles.[319] Some admit that supernatural interventions are possible in principle but deny that they happen in practice. In this respect, finite godism is similar to deism,[320] which claims a supernatural Creator but disclaims any supernatural acts in the creation. Deism is properly distinguished from finite godism in that the deistic God has no intrinsic limits on his power, but both views see miracles as a violation of natural law. And since they place a high emphasis on the

regularity and uniformity of the world, they do not believe that miracles interrupt that regularity and uniformity.

Finite Godism's View of Humans

Finite godists believe that ultimately humanity is created by God. However, since Charles Darwin, finite godists have been convinced that God used a natural evolutionary process to produce man. Some finite godists (such as Henri Bergson) even equate God with the evolutionary force in nature.

Most finite godists admit humans have a soul, and some believe persons are immortal. All reject the purely materialistic view of humans held by atheists,[321] but not all are sure there is life after death.

Finite Godism's View of Ethics

Few finite godists believe in ethical absolutes. Since God is not unchangeable, it follows that no value based in him would be immutable either. Many, however, believe that values are objective and enduring. Some even hold that certain values are unconditional. However, since they do not believe God has revealed any unequivocal ethical norms, persons are left to decide for themselves the right course of action in each situation. The general guidance in these decisions is provided in different ways by different finite-god views.

Finite Godism's View of History and Human Destiny

Here too there are great divergences among finite godists. Some are more optimistic than others. Some point to a steady evolutionary progress of the universe as the hope for final victory. Most are less assured that good will vanquish all evil. All admit it is possible that there will be no final victory at all. It is even conceivable that evil may overcome good, though most finite godists find this intuitively repugnant. Nevertheless, since God is limited and (at best) is struggling with evil himself, there is no assurance of a final victory of good over evil. The struggle may simply go on endlessly.

An Evaluation of Finite Godism

Finite godism contains many significant insights into reality. However, as a system, finite godism has some serious problems.

Some Positive Contributions

Some of the more positive values of finite godism will be briefly noted here. For more detailed expositions, see the works on finite godism listed below.

1. *A Realistic Approach to Evil.* Unlike other worldviews, such as pantheism, finite godism does not attempt to avoid the reality of evil or, like the proverbial ostrich, put its head in the sand and ignore it. It is in facing the problem squarely that most finite godists have come to their position, reasoning that if evil is as real and widespread as it is, then an infinite God cannot exist.

2. *Limitations on the Exercise of Divine Power.* Whatever else can be said about the meaning of the word *omnipotent*, it cannot mean that God can literally do anything. Finite godists are right to point to a limitation in the use of God's power. For example, God cannot use his power (limited or unlimited) to create and destroy at the same time. Surely God cannot make square circles or do any impossible thing (like will himself out of existence). God cannot give creatures free choice and yet at the same time force them to act contrary to their choices.

Likewise, finite godism points to a real problem in many views of evil; namely, "the best possible world" may not be this actual world with all the evil in it. Or, more properly put, just because we can *conceive* of a universe with less (or no) evil does not mean that God can *achieve* such a universe. In this sense, in a world of free creatures (whether freely created by God or not), there are some limitations on the use of God's power. For example, if God is good, then he cannot will contrary to the good that he is.

3. *The Need to Struggle against Evil.* Another value that emerges from most forms of finite godism is that it provides an antidote for fatalism. The outcome of the struggle of good and evil does in a real sense depend on humanity. Our efforts can make a difference. Complete determinism is fatal to the needed motivation to fight evil. Finite godists cannot be charged with a passive resignation to the inevitable. Their view calls for real involvement by persons to help overcome evil.

A Negative Evaluation of Finite Godism

In spite of its many positive insights into the nature of things, finite godism as a worldview is fatally flawed in the following ways.

1. *Inadequate View of God*. Philosophically, a finite God is not self-explaining. Such a God is contrary to the undeniable first principle of causality, which affirms that every finite being needs a cause. A finite God is only a large creature, and all creatures need a Creator. A finite being is a contingent being, not a necessary being. A necessary being is one which *cannot* not exist. A contingent being is one which *can* not exist. But whatever could not exist depends for its existence on what cannot not exist—namely, on a necessary being.[322]

Put another way, every limited being is limited by something. This something cannot be limited by another ad infinitum. Hence, there must be a first Unlimited Limiter of everything that is limited. A finite (limited) god turns out not to be the Creator but merely a creature, who calls for an infinite Creator to explain why he exists.

2. *Inadequate View of Moral Perfection.* There is another problem for modern forms of finite godism. If God is not completely good, then by what standard are we measuring him? We cannot measure him by the standard of his own nature, for he measures up perfectly. But if we measure God by some absolute moral law beyond God, then the Legislator of this absolute law would be God. For laws come from lawgivers, and moral prescriptions come from moral prescribers. If so, would not absolutely perfect moral laws come from an absolutely perfect Moral Law Giver? In short, if a finite God falls short of an absolute standard of goodness, then he is not really God. The absolute moral being beyond him would be God.

Perhaps this is why most finite godists desire to limit only God's power and not his goodness. But to an outsider this looks like both an arbitrary judgment and wishful thinking. Furthermore, how can God be an infinitely good being when he is only a finite being? How can one be more of anything than he has the capacity to be? How can the attributes of God be extended farther than his actual nature allows? Can one's knowledge, for example, be extended farther than his brain allows?

Further, those who believe God is limited in perfection as well as power violate a fundamental law of thought: they engage in circular reasoning, for God by definition is the ultimate standard of perfection. So how can he be imperfect? If he were not-perfect, that would imply that there is an ultimate standard of perfection beyond God by which we know he is imperfect. But God is the ultimate standard of perfection. Hence, finite godism, which denies god is perfect, is arguing in a vicious circle. As C. S. Lewis said, "My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line."[323] But the ultimate standard of perfection is by definition God. So if there were an imperfect, finite god, he would not be the ultimate God but something less. Actually, there seems to be no way to posit a finitely good god without there being an infinitely good God as a standard for measuring him.

3. *Inadequate View of Worship.* What is more, anything incompletely good is not worthy of worship. To worship means to attribute ultimate worth to something or someone. But why should one attribute ultimate worth to what is not ultimately worthy? Every finite thing is a creature, and worship of the creature, rather than the Creator, is idolatry. Or to borrow Paul Tillich's terms, an ultimate commitment should not be given to anything less than an Ultimate. But a less-than-ultimately-good being is not an ultimate Good. Thus a finitely good god is not ultimately worthy of worship. And for a worldview to be adequate it should be not only consistent and comprehensive but also spiritually relevant. As Edward J. Carnell observed under the category of "internal Experience," "If Christianity [or anything else] is true, the heart has nothing to fear. If it is not true, the heart ought to rest its hope somewhere else. The increase of truth should mean the increase of subjective peace, not *vice versa*."[324] It should not only be thinkable; it should also be livable, as Francis Schaeffer argued when he wrote:

> Modern men say there is no love, there is only sex, but they fall in love. Men say there are no moral motions, everything is behavioristic, but they all have moral motions—every moment of his life—he is acting as though Christianity were true and it is only the Christian system that tells him why he can, must, and does act the way he does.[325]

So, if a view is true, it should be livable.

Our concept of worldview comes from the German word *Weltanshauung*, which means a world and *life* view. So a comprehensive worldview in this sense should be something that not only accords with good reason[326] and fits the facts,[327] but it should be one that fulfills our spiritual need as well. In short, it should satisfy both the head and the heart. Of course, one should not bypass the head on the way to the heart. Hence, we have an extended discussion of the rational and factual basis for one's acceptance of a worldview. But once we do this, then we should not stop at the head and never reach the heart. As Pascal said, "What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."[328]

So if only the true God can truly fill the God-sized vacuum in the heart, then it is our duty to find him.

4. *Inadequate View of Evil.* As will be shown elsewhere,[329] the problem of evil does not eliminate a theistic God. We cannot even know there are ultimate injustices in the world unless we have some ultimate standard of justice beyond the world (= God). Contrary to finite godist arguments, only a theistic view of an all-powerful, all-good God guarantees that evil will be defeated, for only if

God is all-powerful can he defeat evil. And only if God is all-good does he want to defeat it. But if he can do it and wants to do it, then it will happen. Only an all-powerful and all-good God guarantees it. Hence, if evil is to be defeated, a finite God will not suffice for the task.

Furthermore, there is a serious fallacy in the argument for a finite God. It assumes wrongly that because evil is *not yet* defeated, it *never will be* defeated. But this does not follow. God could have a plan that is not yet completely fulfilled. Don't judge a book until you have read the last chapter. And the last chapter of human history has not yet been written. God may *yet* defeat evil. As noted above, if God is all-powerful and all-good, then God *will* defeat evil.

Some finite godists seem to admit this point. Peter Bertocci, for example, said there is evil "whose destructive effect, *so far as we know*, is greater than any good which may come from it."[330] But that is precisely the problem: How can a finite human know far enough into the future to say for sure nothing will ever be done to ultimately defeat evil and bring in a greater good? If this is so, then however improbable it may seem to us, it is still possible that the future may bring good news.

Furthermore, if there is an all-powerful and all-good God, this automatically guarantees that evil *will* be defeated in the future. For an all-good God has the desire to defeat evil. An all-powerful God has the ability to defeat evil. Hence, that evil is not yet defeated only proves that evil will be defeated in the future. No finite God can guarantee this.[331]

Finite godism claims that God cannot defeat evil completely. Some say this is because of an intrinsic limit in God's nature. Others claim it is because of an extrinsic limitation on God. But the only extrinsic limitation that the Creator could not destroy would be an eternal, uncreated, and necessary being. For a created or contingent being could be destroyed by an uncreated or necessary being. But if there is an eternal, uncreated, and necessary being beyond God, then it is the Creator, and the "finite god" turns out only to be a creation and therefore limited. If, however, the being outside God is only created and contingent and yet God is uncreated and necessary, then God could destroy it. But if God can create and destroy anything, then why not admit God is all-powerful?

In brief, the dilemma is this: If God can destroy all else in the universe besides himself, then God is all-powerful. If there is some other indestructible being outside God, then God is not an all-powerful God; this other being can resist his power. But in either case, the finite god view would seem to be wrong, for there would be an all-powerful Being who could destroy the finite god.

Finite godists admit there is no guarantee that good will ultimately triumph over evil. If so, those who work for good may work for naught. Of course, it often happens in the everyday course of events that our efforts are frustrated. However, a religious commitment is not an everyday commitment; it is an ultimate commitment. Can a finite god, who cannot guarantee victory even if we put our all into it, really inspire an ultimate commitment? How many people will really make an ultimate commitment to work for what they have no assurance will ultimately win? We can be inspired to confess courageously, "I would rather lose in a battle that the side I'm on is ultimately going to win, than win in a battle that the side I'm on will ultimately lose." Thousands upon thousands have died with a belief like this. But how many will be motivated to proclaim, "I would rather lose in a battle that may ultimately lose than in one that may ultimately win"? But this seems to be a necessary claim for a devotee of a finite god. It seems unlikely that such a commitment will be made by anything like the masses of persons needed to give even a faint prospect of victory for finite godism, which depends so largely on human efforts for good.

The finite godist worldview has other problems. Most are not directly relevant to our pursuit here to know whether it is true. An exception is its denial of the supernatural. This will be treated later, in chapter 16.

Summary and Conclusion

In spite of some positive contributions in the pursuit of truth mentioned above, finite godism fails the basic tests for a worldview. It violates fundamental first principles of reality, such as the law of noncontradiction and the law of causality. Further, its basic arguments for God's finitude fail to accomplish their goal, it proves inadequate in solving the problem of evil, and it is not only metaphysically insufficient but religiously insufficient in its view of God—not regarding God as an object of worship who is worthy of an ultimate commitment.

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11
Pantheism

Pantheism is the polar opposite of deism. The latter stresses God's distinction from the real world, and the former emphasizes God's identity with it. Deism holds that God is beyond the world but not in it in a miraculous way; pantheism believes that God is in the world, or rather, God is the world (universe). So deism stresses God's transcendence over the world, and pantheism emphasizes his immanence in the world.

There are several kinds of pantheism. The *absolute* pantheism of Parmenides and Shankara Hinduism indentified only one being in the universe and designated all else as nonbeing or illusion. There is also the *emanational* pantheism of Plotinus, who believed that everything flows from God the way a flower unfolds from a seed. Further, there is *developmental* pantheism, wherein God is unfolded in an evolutionary or historical way. Hegel's philosophy is an example of the latter, in which God unfolds historically. Others are *modal* pantheists, such as Spinoza, who considered finite things to be modes or moments in one infinite substance. Also, there are *manifestational* or *multilevel* pantheisms, such as are found in various forms of Hinduism. It will be instructive to look at several of these pantheistic systems. Finally, there is the *permeational* pantheism of Zen Buddhism, Star Wars, and *Avatar*, wherein the Life Force permeates all things.

An Exposition of Pantheism

The metaphysical background of pantheism is monism, and Parmenides is the father of Western monism. Hence, it is philosophically foundational to begin our analysis of the pantheistic worldview with Parmenides.

The Monism of Parmenides (born ca. 515 BC)

A monist believes that reality is ultimately unified. An absolute monist believes that reality is ultimately and only one; all multiplicity lacks any reality. Being is, and nonbeing is not. All is One and One is All. Being is one, and multiplicity is nonbeing and illusion.

Parmenides's logic of monism can be summarized very simply. There cannot be two realities or beings, for if this were so, one would have to differ from the other. If there were no difference, then they would be one identical reality and not two. In order for there to be really different things, there must be some real difference. On the one hand, everything that differs must differ either by being or by nonbeing, since there are no other ways to differ. However, two beings cannot differ by nothing or nonbeing. To differ by nothing is not to differ at all. And if they do not differ at all, then they are identical and one. On the other hand, two things cannot differ by being, for being is the very feature they have in common, and things cannot differ by what they have in common; that is, the point of identity cannot also be the point of diversity. It follows, then, Parmenides argued, that there cannot be

two beings in the universe. All things are ultimately and absolutely one. Any seeming multiplicity is but an illusion.

Parmenides's disciple, Zeno, used a reductio ad absurdum argument to prove his master's monistic position. If one assumes multiplicity is possible, Zeno said, one ends in irresolvable paradoxes. For instance, if a line is divisible from point A to point B, then it can be divided in half and half of half and so on infinitely. But infinite divisibility is impossible since an infinite number cannot be reached. Hence, divisibility is not possible. Therefore reality is indivisible. Likewise Zeno argued that motion is impossible since to move from A to B, one must first go halfway and half of half before that and so on infinitely. But since an infinite can never be traversed, one can never really move from one point to the next. It follows, then, that all is one indivisible and untransversible point of absolute identity. Or, as Parmenides would have said, there is one solid, eternal, indivisible ball of Being.

The Emanational Pantheism of Plotinus (AD 205–70)

Early Greek monism came to final fruition in the late Greek mysticism of Plotinus, who is the classic example of Western pantheism. In him Greek rationalistic monism blossoms into pantheistic mysticism. A survey of his system from the *Enneads* will exemplify an emanational type of pantheism.

Contrary to Greek thought generally, Plotinus held that ultimate reality goes beyond being to absolute unity. (1) The *One* is the absolute source of all being and multiplicity. Everything in the universe differs as to its degree of unity as it both flows from and varies from the absolute Unity (God). God must be absolutely One because all multiplicity presupposes some prior unity, but each multiple is made up of little unities. Further, the absolute Unity (God) is not self-conscious, since self-reflection involves a basic duality of knower and known, and absolute unity as such has no duality. (2) Hence, when out of the absolute necessity of its own nature the One unfolds as a seed into a flower or as center into radii, these emanate *Nous* (Mind). This first emanant is the universal Mind that makes all knowing possible. Nous is the One becoming self-conscious and forming what Plotinus calls *One-Many*. When Nous reflects backward on its source (the One), it becomes knowingly self-conscious. Then when Nous reflects inward on itself, it produces other minds or knowing beings. (3) And when it reflects outward, it gives rise to Life (or World Soul); this is called *One-and-Many* by Plotinus. From World Soul spring all other living things (souls) as species within a genus. The One, Nous, and World Soul form an emanational triadic Godhead from which all other things flow both emanationally and necessarily.[332] (4) Beneath Mind and Soul there is Matter, which is the most multiple of all, the *Many*. Since the entire process is a necessary unfolding from unity to greater and greater multiplicity, it is necessary at last that the most multiple should be reached: this is Matter. Matter is not absolutely nothing; it is the last remnant of something before the emanations reach the brink of oblivion. Matter is the point at which no more multiplicity is possible without going into nonbeing. Further, since unity is absolutely good, it follows that multiplicity is evil. Matter itself has no residue of good; it has only the bare capacity for good. There is, then, a complete hierarchy of being and goodness from First to last, from God to evil, from Unity to multiplicity, and from the One beyond Mind to Matter.[333]

This process, however, is not one-directional. Not only does God emanate forth, but also the emanants return to the Source from which they come. There is a kind of boomerang of being whereby what comes down must go up again. What flows from ultimate Unity seeks to return again to this sanctuary. But the emanants are always inferior to the Source. Hence, absolute multiplicity cannot destroy absolute Unity; evil cannot defeat Good, and nonbeing cannot annihilate Being.[334]

Humanity, the microcosm that possesses Mind, Soul, and Matter, is the point at which the return trip is made conscious. Wandering about in the foreign land of evil and multiplicity, a human's higher soul becomes homesick for the Fatherland of goodness and unity. A person's higher soul is, as it were, on an elastic band that can be stretched only so far into the material world. Sooner or later a "snap" pulls the person back toward the source from which he or she was originally stretched out. When a being overlooks the brink of utter oblivion, it recoils back toward Being and the Source of Being. The final remnant of good is repelled as it stares into the naked face of evil.[335]

Mounting one's way back to unity is not easy; matter is a drag on the soul. Hence, asceticism is a necessary preliminary stage in the ascent to God. One must turn from the outward, multiple world to the inner, more unified world of Soul. The denial of the physical is essential to the attainment of the spiritual. The move from the *external* to the *internal* is the first move toward attaining union with God.[336]

The second stage is a move from the *internal* to the *eternal*—that is, the inward to the upward. This movement is from the lower soul to the higher Soul and from Soul to Mind, which is above Soul. This is accomplished by mediation. In short, one must move from the sensible to the intellectual, by which Plotinus does not mean moving to the realm of one's individual intellect but identifying our mind with Mind (Nous). Knower and known must become one; herein is the highest and most unified act of knowing. However, even when one's individual mind has become one with Mind, there is still a basic duality of knower and known; absolute Unity has not yet been attained.[337]

For the highest and final union, neither the preparatory asceticism nor the preliminary meditation will suffice; the One can be attained only by a "leap" of mystical intuition in which one becomes "one with the One" and "alone with the Alone." It is a leap beyond Being and beyond knowing. There is no consciousness but only convergence. The center of our being corresponds with the Center of all Being. In this state one has gone beyond the cognitive to the intuitional, beyond the rational to the mystical. Herein everything is absolute unity again. The prodigals have returned home, and the strays are back in the fold. What emanated out has returned; everything came from God (*ex deo*), and to him all must return.[338]

Plotinus acknowledges that he has but negative knowledge of the One. He knows not what it is, except that it is not-many. All positive, rational, or cognitive knowledge of absolute Unity is impossible. The best one can do is attribute to the One perfections that it produces but does not itself possess. Hence, we call what the One produces good, beauty, and being, but it does not really and intrinsically possess these characteristics that are attributed to it. We can speak about it only in terms of what comes from it; the sequents do not really tell us anything of their Source. God is literally ineffable.[339]

In summary, Plotinus's form of pantheism is emanational in that everything flows out of One and returns to it. Ultimately All is in the One; the One is not in the All. The Source of all reality is Unity, and it is the degree of unity by which something is constituted in the very nature of its being. The less unified, the less real something is. Hence, there is not in Plotinus a rigid and inflexible monism, but an emanational and unfolding divine unity that cascades down the great chain of being from Unity toward greater multiplicity.

The Modal Pantheism of Baruch Spinoza (1632–77)

Baruch Spinoza was a rationalist in his epistemology (see chap. 2) but a pantheist in his metaphysical position. He begins axiomatically and definitionally. "By *God*, I mean a being

absolutely infinite—that is, a substance consisting of infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality." By "substance" Spinoza means "that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself." "Attribute," differing only formally, not actually, from "essence," means "that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance." A "mode" is a "modification [affection] of substance, or that which exists in, and is conceived through, something other than itself."[340] Armed with these definitions and some basic axioms, Spinoza proceeds to deduce the existence of a pantheistic God.

First, "substance is by nature prior to its modifications." Two substances whose attributes differ would have nothing in common. Two or more distinct things would have to differ either by their substance or by their attributes, since "everything which exists, exists either in itself or in something else." It follows, then, that "there cannot exist in the universe two or more substances having the same nature or attributes." The proof Spinoza offers for this is reminiscent of Parmenides: "If several distinct substances be granted, they must be distinguished one from the other, either by the difference of their attributes, or by the difference of their modifications." But if they differ "only by the difference of their attributes, it will be granted that there cannot be more than one with identical attributes," for they cannot differ by that in which they are identical. However, if they differ by their modifications only, "it follows that setting the modifications aside, and considering substance in itself, that is truly, there cannot be conceived one substance different from another—that is (by Prop. IV). There cannot be granted several substances, but one substance only." Hence, monism follows geometrically from self-evident definitions and axioms of thought.[341]

Not only is there only one substance in the universe—everything else being merely a modification of it—but also that substance is infinite. Spinoza's proof of this contention is as follows: "There can only be one substance with an identical attribute, and existence follows from its nature (Prop. VII); its nature, therefore, involves existence, either as finite or infinite." But "it does not exist as finite, for (by Def. II) it would then be limited by something else of the same kind, which would also necessarily exist (Prop. VII); and there would be two substances with an identical attribute, which is absurd (Prop. V). It therefore exists as infinite. Q. E. D." So there exists one and only one infinite substance—namely, God.[342]

According to Spinoza, "the more reality or being a thing has, the greater the number of its attributes." From this it follows that "there is but one substance in the universe, and . . . it is absolutely infinite," for "nothing in nature is more clear than that each and every entity must be conceived under some attribute, and that its reality or being is in proportion to the number of its attributes expressing necessity or eternity and infinity." Consequently, "it is abundantly clear, that an absolutely infinite being must necessarily be defined as consisting in infinite attributes, each of which expresses a certain eternal and infinite essence." And if God must be defined as a substance consisting of infinite attributes, he must necessarily exist. "If this be denied, conceive, if possible, that God does not exist; then his essence does not involve existence. But this (by Prop. VII) is absurd. Therefore God necessarily exists."[343]

God, then, is the only substance that can exist, for "if any substance besides God were granted, it would have to be explained by some attribute of God, and thus two substances with the same attribute would exist, which (by Prop. V) is absurd; therefore, besides God no substance can be granted, or, consequently, be conceived." From this it follows "that extension and thought are either attributes of God or accidents (affections) of the attributes of God." For "whatever is, is in God, and without God nothing can be, or be conceived." This does not mean that God has a body, mind, and passions like humanity. This is wrong because there is no definite quantity in God; God is absolutely infinite. Yet

we must draw the conclusion that "extended substance is one of the infinite attributes of God." The fallacy in opposing arguments, Spinoza said, is that they all assume wrongly that extended substance is composed of parts. This is not true. God is infinitely extended and yet has no parts. God's substance is indivisible, for "if it could be divided, the parts into which it was divided would either retain the nature of absolutely infinite substance, or they would not. If the former, we should have several substances of the same nature, which (by Prop. V) is absurd." And "if the latter, then (by Prop. VII) substance absolutely infinite could cease to exist, which (by Prop. XI) is also absurd," for nothing can divide and destroy what is by nature a necessary existence. Therefore, God must be infinitely extended and without parts.[344]

In summary, "All things . . . are in God, and all things which come to pass, come to pass solely through the laws of the infinite nature of God, and follow . . . from the necessity of his essence," for "from the necessity of the divine nature must follow an infinite number of things in infinite ways—that is, all things which can fall within the sphere of infinite intellect." This follows because "from the given definition of anything the intellect infers several properties which already necessarily follow therefrom." And since God is necessary, "it follows that from the necessity of his nature an infinite number of things . . . must necessarily follow." Hence, "God acts solely by the laws of his own nature, and is not constrained by anyone." In this sense God is said to be "free"—that is, to act "by the sole necessity of his nature, wherefore God is . . . the sole free cause. Q. E. D." God is not "free" in any deliberative sense, for "neither intellect nor will appertains to God's nature."[345]

Since God is necessary and since all things flow necessarily from him, it follows that "an infinite number of things . . . have necessarily flowed forth in an infinite number of ways, or always follow from the same necessity; in the same way as from the nature of a triangle is follows . . . that its three interior angles are equal to two right angles." So "all things which are, are in God. . . . God, therefore, is the indwelling and not the transient cause of all things." And since God is eternal as well as necessary, all things flow both eternally and necessarily from God, for "all things which follow from the absolute nature of any attribute of God must always exist and be infinite." This is true of modes as well as attributes, for a mode that can be conceived to exist only through some necessary perfection of God must therefore itself exist necessarily. Otherwise, it could not even be conceived to exist. From this it follows that every event and act in the finite world is determined by God, for "every individual thing, or everything which is finite and has a conditional existence, cannot exist or be conditioned to act, unless it be conditioned for existence and action by a cause other than itself." But since this causal-conditioned series cannot go on to infinity, we must arrive, alas, at a first conditioning cause of every other act or event in the finite world. In short, "all things which are, are in God, and so depend on God, that without him they can neither be nor be conceived," for "nothing in the universe is contingent, but all things are conditioned to exist and operate in a particular manner by the necessity of the divine nature." Whatever is, is in God. "But God cannot be called a thing contingent. For he exists necessarily, and not contingently. Further, the modes of the divine nature follow there-from necessarily, and not contingently."[346]

In Spinoza's pantheistic universe, as well as in Plotinus's, evil flows necessarily from God, for "things could not have been brought into being by God in any manner or in any order different from that which has in fact obtained." It clearly follows that "things have been brought into being by God in the highest perfection, inasmuch as they necessarily followed from a most perfect nature," for "God's will cannot be different . . . from God's perfection. Therefore neither can things be different." If one were to ask Spinoza why, if God is perfect, there are so many imperfections in nature, he would reply: "The perfection of things is to be reckoned only from their own nature and power; things are

not more or less perfect, according as they delight or offend human senses." As to why God created humans who could and would be controlled by anything less than reason, it was, according to Spinoza, because "matter was not lacking to him for the creation of every degree of perfection from highest to lowest; or, more strictly, because the laws of his nature are so vast, as to suffice for the production of everything conceivable by an infinite intelligence, as I have shown in Prop. XVI."[347]

In summary, God is an infinitely perfect and necessary being. Everything else is either an attribute or mode of his substance. Since God is infinite and necessary, an infinity of necessary degrees of perfection flow necessarily from his nature. Evil is necessary because with degrees of perfection also come corresponding degrees of imperfection. All is in God and flows from God. God's substance is absolutely good; it is only the infinite modal manifestations of this one substance that manifest the degrees of perfection (and imperfection). Hence, there is no evil in the infinite oneness and necessity of God. Evil is found only in the modal manifestations, which are less than ultimately real.

The Neo-Hindu Multilevel Pantheism of Radhakrishnan (1888–1975)

The Indian religious experience is rich in variety. Everything from impersonal early forms of theism to types of monism is found in the Upanishads. One of the most interesting and influential forms of neo-Hinduism is that of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. His pantheism is modified in the direction of a favorable appeal to those influenced by Western theism.

According to Radhakrishnan there are several statuses or levels of reality. "We have (1) the Absolute, (2) God as Creative power, (3) God immanent in this world. These are not to be regarded as separate entities. They are arranged in this order because there is a logical priority." One proceeds from and is based on the preceding. "We thus get the four poises or statuses of reality, (1) the Absolute, *Brahman*, (2) the Creative Spirit, *Isvara*, (3) the World-Spirit, *Hiranya-garbha*, and (4) the World [*Virāj*]."[348]

Radhakrishnan compares this to neopantheism: "In Plotinus we have a similar scheme (i) The One alone, the simple, the unconditioned. . . . (ii) The *Nous*. The Intelligible world which Plotinus calls One-Many, the world of Platonic forms or archetypes. . . . (iii) One and Many. The soul of the All is the third, which fashions the material universe on the model of divine thoughts, the ideas laid up within the Divine Mind. . . . (iv) The many alone. It is the world-body, the world of matter without form."[349]

The Hindu scheme of reality, however, differs from Plotinian emanationalism in that Brahman is manifest on different levels but does not emanate forth, with lower levels flowing out of higher ones. In this sense neo-Hindu pantheism is more a multilevel pantheism than emanational pantheism.

Brahman, *the Ultimate Reality*. For Radhakrishnan, *Brahman* comes from the root *brh*, meaning "to grow, to burst forth." *Brahman* is the one single reality from which the world of multiplicity springs. It is the subtle and infinite essence of which everything perceived is made. As formally defined in one Upanishad, "That from which these beings are born, that in which born they live, and that into which they enter at their death is *Brahman*." That "on which all else depends, to which all existences aspire, *Brahman* which is sufficient to itself, aspiring to no other, without any need, is the source of all other beings." It is the Primordial and the Supreme. "Verily, in the beginning this world was *Brahman*."[350]

Like Plotinus writing of the One, Radhakrishnan believes *Brahman* to be indescribable. "We can only describe the Absolute in negative terms. In the words of Plotinus, 'we say what he is not, we

cannot say what he is.' The Absolute is beyond the sphere of predication. It is the *sunyata* of the Buddhists."[351]

Isvara *the Creative Spirit*. The next level of this neo-Hindu manifestation of God is personal. It is like the Plotinian Nous or the Platonic Logos. Here there is simple duality of subject and object. It is *mahat*, the great one, or *buddhi*, the intellect. As cosmic intelligence it contains all the ideas that serve as the principle of individuation for all other things. *Isvara* is the Supreme Light, the principle of communication. He is the Supreme Lord, who, like Plato's Demiurgos, is the creative Mind behind the universe. Thus, "we thus get the conception of an Absolute-God, *Brahman—Isvara*, where the first term indicates infinite being and possibility, and the second suggests creative freedom." As the Absolute, Brahman is perfect and needs nothing. "It is free to move or not to move, to throw itself into forms or remain formless. If it still indulges its power of creativity, it is because of its free choice." In *Isvara* "the Supreme who is unmeasured and immeasurable becomes measured and defined. Immutable becomes infinite fecundity."[352]

Hiranya-garbha, *the World-Spirit*. The world is not only a creation of *Isvara* but a manifestation of *Hiranya-garbha*. The world is the free self-determination of God, for the power of self-expression belongs to God. *Hiranya-garbha* is the spirit that pervades and animates the universe. "The World-soul is the divine creator, the supreme lord *Isvara* at work in the universe." It is a definite possibility of the Absolute being realized in the universe. According to Radhakrishnan, the World-Soul is grounded in *Isvara*; no sharp distinction is drawn between them in the Upanishads. In fact, each is a successive manifestation of the Absolute. "The Absolute conceived as it is in itself, independent of any creation, is called *Brahman*." And "when it is thought of as the spirit moving everywhere in the universe, it is called *Hiranya-garbha*; when it is thought of as a personal God creating, protecting and destroying the universe, it is called *Isvara*." *Isvara* becomes *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, and *Siva* when his three functions are taken separately, but "the real is not a sum of these. It is an ineffable unity in which these conceptual distinctions are made. These are fourfold to our mental view, separate only in appearance. If we identify the real with any one definable state of being, however pure and perfect, we violate the unity and divide the indivisible."[353]

Virāj, *the Manifestation of the Absolute in the World*. According to Radhakrishnan, the world is not an illusion but a lower-level manifestation of the Absolute.[354] By contrast with *Brahman* itself, the world seems almost nothing, but it is the last manifestation of reality. "*Maya* is the power of *Isvara* from which the world arises." However, "God does not create the world but becomes it. Creation is expression. It is not a making of something out of nothing. It is not making so much as becoming." Hence, *maya* is not illusion but the creative manifestation of God in the multiple world. Of course the world of duality and multiplicity is admittedly not the absolutely real. It is only an echo of the real. "The world is neither one with *Brahman* nor wholly other than *Brahman*." The world is grounded in *Brahman*. "The many are parts of *Brahman* even as waves are parts of the sea. All the possibilities of the world are affirmed in the first being, God."[355]

Karma, *Rebirth and Eternal Life*. When *buddhi*, intelligence, turns itself from *jiva* (individual self, ego) toward *atman* (universal self), it develops true knowledge or intuition (*vidya*). Atman is *Brahman* as the universal basis of human personality. Hence, *Brahman* is known through the inner self of a human. Thus one must turn from the outward and multiple to the inner world of thought and unity. "Knowledge presupposes unity or oneness of thought and being, a unity that transcends the differentiation of subject and object." Logical reasoning is incapable of comprehending God, and "logical incapacity is not evidence of actual impossibility." The individual should develop the habit of introversion, of abstracting from the outside world and looking within himself. "By a process of

abstraction we get behind knowing, feeling and willing to the essential Self, the God within. We must silence our speech, mind and will. We cannot hear the voice of the spirit in us, so long as we are lost in vain talk, mental rambling and empty desires."[356]

"Until we negate the ego and get fixed in the Divine Ground we are bound to the endless procession of events called *samsara*" (cycles of rebirth). The principle that governs this world of becoming is *karma*. It is the law of retribution by which a person inherits in the next life his or her deserts from this life. *Karma* is not an external law imposed by God but an unfolding of the law of our being. As Radhakrishnan noted, "If there is a fundamental difference between Christianity and Hinduism, it is said that it consists in this, that while the Hindu to whatever school he belongs believes in a succession of lives, the Christian believes that 'it is appointed to men once to die, but after this the judgment.'" By meditation, however, the Hindu believer can overcome the cycle of rebirths dictated by the law of *karma* and be united to *Brahman*, for "he who knows *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*. Perfection is a state of mind, not contingent of time or place." Life eternal, or *moska*, is liberation from births and deaths, for "he who knows himself to be all can have no desire. When the Supreme is seen, the knots of the heart are cut asunder. . . . There can be no sorrow or pain or fear when there is no other."[357]

Radhakrishnan believes that "the individual soul is eternal. It endures throughout the cosmic process." Nevertheless, "the individual soul is an aspect of the Transcendent in the universe and when liberated from all limitations, he acts with his centre in the Supreme."[358] And its inner peace is manifested in the joyous freedom of outer activity. Thus union with *Brahman* is a state of bliss or nirvana that not only is attainable in this life but is also the guarantee that one will not have to undergo another life of pain and frustration stemming from selfish desire, for in nirvana the self attains its release from individual striving by achieving union with God.

The Permeational Pantheism of Star Wars

Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhism is a form of permeational pantheism. D. T. Suzuki wrote, "Zen is the ocean, Zen is the air, Zen is the mountain, Zen is thunder and lightening, the spring flower, summer heat, and winter snow; nay, more than that, Zen is the man."[359] Zen is life. "I raise my hand; I take a book from the other side of this desk; I hear the boys playing ball outside my window; I see the clouds blown away beyond the neighboring woods:—in all these I am practicing Zen, I am living Zen. Zen is a personal experience of life unencumbered by any abstractions of conceptualizations of life."[360]

In Zen God is man, and man is God. Citing the Western mystic Meister Eckhart with approval, Suzuki states: "'Simple people conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so; God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him.' In this absolute oneness of things Zen establishes the foundations of it's philosophy."[361] Not only is man God and God man, but all is God and God is all. Everything and everyone are really One. "Buddhas [i.e., enlightened Ones] and sentient beings [i.e., those still ignorant] both grow out of One Mind, and there is no other reality than this Mind."[362] What this all-embracing Mind is, is no-mindedness, which is man's spiritual nature. Suzuki says: "This Nature [i.e., man's spiritual nature] is the Mind, and the Mind is the Buddha, and the Buddha is the Way, and the Way is Zen."[363] The Mind may be described as having "been in existence since the beginningless past; it knows neither birth nor death; it is neither blue nor yellow; it has neither shape nor form; it is beyond the category of being and non-being; it is not to be measured by age, old or new; it is neither long nor short; it is neither large nor small; for it transcends all limits, words, traces, and opposites."[364] In short, Mind is all and all is Mind.

The world we perceive "must be considered illusory and empty." Individual beings do exist, but they are not "ultimate and absolutely real." Rather, they are real "only in so far as they are considered a partial realization of Suchness." Indeed "Suchness . . . lies not hidden *behind* them, but exists immanently *in* them. Things are empty and illusory so long as they are particular things and are not thought of in reference to the All that is Suchness and Reality."[365] This Suchness or All, Buddhists do not like to call God. The very word *God* is offensive to most followers of Buddhism, especially when it is intimately associated in vulgar minds with the idea of a Creator who produced the world out of nothing. Instead a legion of other names have been "invented by the fertile imagination of Buddhists for their object of reverence as called forth by their various spiritual needs."[366]

Furthermore, Absolute Suchness or Reality cannot be grasped "as it truly is," for it goes beyond all categories, even the most basic categories of existence and nonexistence. Suzuki states: "This indefinable and unthinkable Void may be 'more fully interpreted' in this way: Suchness is neither that which is existence nor that which is non-existence; neither [is it] that which is at once existence and non-existence."[367] It goes beyond all categories, beyond all logic, and beyond all thought. This is God, and God is All, and All is Mind, and Mind is Buddha, and Buddha is the Way, and the Way is Zen.

Zen Buddhism maintains that individual humans "are nothing but a self-manifestation of the Dharmakaya" (i.e., the Ultimate). Further, "Individuals are not isolated existences, as imagined by most people. If isolated, they are nothing, they are so many soap-bubbles which vanish one after another in the vacuity of space. All particular existences acquire their meaning only when they are thought of in their oneness in the Dharmakaya."[368] This should not be taken as a denial of man's materiality or immateriality, for man has both and more.[369] However, it is a denial of man's individuality in any ultimate sense. People only appear to be individual beings; in reality they are all one in the One. It is the failure of many people, in their ignorance, to recognize this fact that constitutes the "veil of Maya." And it is the goal of Zen to help people beyond their egoism so that they may realize their oneness in God and as such become immortal.[370]

Star Wars. George Lucas's Star Wars series embraced a form of Zen Buddhism. The "Force" permeated all things. "[Irvin] Kershner and I sat down at my home in California," Lucas said in an interview, "and we talked about Eastern philosophy. He's into Zen, and I've been into Zen since I was about 26; now I'm 40." In an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, the producer "Kershner said, 'I wanna introduce some Zen here because I don't want the kids to walk away just feeling that everything is shoot-'em-up, but that there's also a little something to think about here in terms of yourself and your surroundings." "That's what Yoda, who's a Zen Master, is saying."[371]

Familiar concepts and phrases from the film describe permeational pantheism. The Force is a universal energy field that envelops all things and radiates from them.[372] It is generated by living things and surrounds all things.[373] In a biography of Lucas, Dale Pollock asserts that "Lucas wanted to instill in children a belief in a supreme being . . . a universal deity that he named the Force, a cosmic energy source that incorporates and consumes all living things."[374] Pollock concludes, "Yoda's philosophy is Buddhist."[375] Lucas told *Time* magazine that what he was trying to say in *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope* is "that there is a God and there is both a good side and a bad side. You have a choice between them, but the world works better if you're on the good side."[376] Indeed, Lucas was heavily influenced by Carlos Castaneda's *Tales of Power*, which depicts a Mexican sorcerer, Don Juan, who uses the phrases "life force" and "binding force of life" to refer to a force that is "everywhere"[377] but "outside the realm of reason."[378] Castaneda also held that humans do not have a "solid body" but are merely "luminous beings."[379] Since sorcery is another name for

witchcraft, the American youth culture has been permeated with this form of pantheism by movies like *Avatar* and the popular series of films based on the Harry Potter novels.

The Central Tenets of Pantheism

There are many kinds of pantheism. There is the absolute pantheism of Parmenides and Shankara Hinduism, in which all reality is one monistic whole and all multiplicity is an absolute illusion or nonbeing. But all other forms of pantheism provide some reality status to some things other than God, at least for a time. Spinoza's modal pantheism holds that everything other than the one infinite substance exists as a mode or moment in the divine essence. Plotinus's emanational pantheism provides that creation comes out of God in various degrees of reality, the reality of each thing depending on its distance from God and in its degree of multiplicity. Hindu pantheism comes in several varieties, but the position of Radhakrishnan is a kind of manifestational or multilevel pantheism in which the one Absolute is revealed on different or descending levels of reality. Other forms of Hindu pantheism would claim that lower levels are not so much manifestations of the Absolute as they are mere appearance or, in the case of some forms of Hindu pantheism, that the world of senses is an outright illusion, an unreality. Finally, there is developmental pantheism, in which God is unfolding himself in the historical or evolutionary process. In the view of Hegel the development is manifest in history. History is the footprints of God in the sands of time. Or, better, history is a phenomenological theophany.

Since space will not permit detailed evaluation of the various kinds of pantheism, we will concentrate on theses that are common to most forms, noting significant points in some of the representative types discussed above.

1. A basic *intuitive epistemology* is characteristic of pantheistic approaches to God. God is understood in the highest and most significant sense not by sensible observation or by rational inference but by mystical intuition that goes beyond the law of noncontradiction.
2. The stress of the *way of negation* in religious language is essential to pantheism. God cannot be adequately expressed in positive terms. Nothing in our experience may be appropriately affirmed of the way God is. God is beyond being and beyond rational knowing.
3. The central pantheistic conception of God is the *absolute unity* and immanence of God. The supremacy and unity of God are the core of ultimate reality and the basis for everything derived from him.
4. *Creation is* ex Deo*, out of God.* Creation from nothing, ex nihilo, is meaningless. God is the source for everything; all is rooted in his being. Creation springs out of God's being either by manifestation, emanation, or some kind of unfolding.
5. *Both creation and evil flow necessarily from God*. The Absolute is not personal, and creation is not a free choice. It flows from God with necessity. Plotinus would say, "The good is diffusive of itself"; that is, it must issue forth the way rays must radiate from the sun or radii from the center of a circle or as a seed unfolds into a flower. And whatever evils, lacks, or deficiencies are seen in the emanations or manifestations are there because they must be there.
6. Many forms of pantheism hold that in the highest and absolute sense God is *neither personal nor conscious*. The Absolute and Supreme is not a he but an it. Personality comes about at best by emanation or manifestation on a lower level.

7. *All reality is ultimately One*, not many. In absolute monism, as in Parmenides, there is no reality status to anything but absolutely one Being. In other pantheisms there is agreement that whatever lesser reality there is in multiplicity and finitude, the many is always in the One but the One is not in the many. That is, unity is the basic reality from which multiplicity flows, not the reverse. Further, whatever lesser reality is accorded to the finite and many, *ultimately* there is only one reality. Temporarily and/or manifestationally there are many modes and aspects of reality. But like radii, there is really only one central point of reality all have in common—that is, in the only Being or One.

An Evaluation of Pantheism

As a world and life view, pantheism has had a broad and persistent influence in the world. Much of the Far Eastern world for most of its recorded history has been heavily influenced by pantheism. Even much of the Western world has been a series of footnotes on Plotinian pantheism. The appeal of pantheism has not been without both truth and value. Examples may be briefly noted.

Positive Insights in Pantheistic Positions

Pantheism has provided much of value to its adherents and has given both insight and challenge to those who do not embrace it as a worldview. Among these values we may take special note of seven.

1. Pantheism attempts to be *comprehensive* in its perspective. It is not a piecemeal philosophy. It is an all-embracing view of the sum total of reality from a certain perspective. In this sense it is both metaphysical and comprehensive, two commendable dimensions essential to any worldview.
2. Pantheists attempt to be *consistent* in their philosophy. They form a whole system of thought that attempts to make every part fit in a self-consistent way.
3. Pantheism has laid special emphasis on an ultimate dimension of reality that cannot be overlooked or denied—namely, *unity*. Unity and harmony are constitutive elements in any adequate worldview. If this is a uni-verse, there must be some reality basis for its uni-ty.
4. No adequate view of a God who is worthy of serious human interest can neglect his *immanent* presence and activity in the world. A God who is totally and completely Other lacks relatability, and no doubt, at least to many, he will lack worshipability. Pantheism appropriately stresses that God is really *in* the world, at least within the depths of the human soul.
5. Pantheism acknowledges that only God is *absolute* and *necessary*. Everything else is less than ultimate and absolute in the supreme sense in which God is. No part of creation is independent or ontologically detached; all is completely dependent on God, who is all in all. This insight is a valuable corrective for many materialisms as well as for deisms.
6. Pantheism invariably involves an *intuitive* epistemological emphasis that is often unappreciated by more empirically oriented minds. This stress on the direct and unmediated intimacy with the object of knowledge (especially God) is not only valuable but unavoidable. Indirect or inferential knowing must rest finally on direct and immediate seeing. All justification must come to an end; first principles must be known intuitively. Hence, some form

of intuitive knowledge is essential to knowing God, who is the ultimate principle (person) in religion.

7. Pantheists place strong and appropriate emphasis on the *via negativa*. God cannot be expressed in positive terms with limited meaning. God is infinite and transcendent, and all limitation must be negated from terms applied to him. Without the way of negation, verbal idolatry results—namely, the finitizing of God. Pantheists have preserved this important dimension of religious language.

One could note numerous other contributions by pantheistic thinkers to the philosophy of history (e.g., Hegel), to comparative religious and human toleration (e.g., Radhakrishnan), and to the preservation of mystical and spiritual emphases, as well as to many other areas. But time has come to critically evaluate the system as a worldview.

Some Criticisms of Pantheism as a Worldview

First and most fundamental, pantheism is actually unaffirmable by a human, for according to pantheism no finite individual reality exists as an entity really different from God or the Absolute. In essence a strict pantheist must affirm, "God is, but I am not." But this is self-defeating, since one must exist in order to affirm that one does not exist.

Of course, most pantheists are not absolute monists in that they allow for some reality to finite humanity, whether it be modal, manifestational, emanational, or whatever. In this way they hope to escape the self-destructive dilemma just mentioned. Their attempt, however, is not convincing, for to claim that a human, as a self-conscious person, is merely a mode or aspect of God is to deny the way people experience themselves. If we are only self-conscious modes, "why are we not conscious of being so? How did this metaphysical amnesia arise and (yet more seriously) come to pervade and dominate our whole experience?"[380] Is it not self-defeating to claim that individual finite selves are less than real? How can any of our individual statements be true, including the statement that pantheism is true? If we are being deceived about the consciousness of our own individual existence, then how do pantheists know that they are not being deceived when they are conscious of reality as ultimately one?

Second, other pantheists attempt to avoid this difficulty by denying they are finite and claiming that they are one with God, the absolute and infinite. However, even in this form pantheism is trapped in inconsistency, for while pantheists can affirm "I am God" without contradiction (since it is really God saying, "I am God"), nonetheless, they must confess that they did not always know they were God. In short, they must confess, "I came to realize I am God," since they had to move from a state of unenlightenment to a state of enlightenment. But to claim "I came to realize that I am God" is self-defeating, for God as the absolute and infinite always knew he was God. So whoever came to realize that he or she was God is not God! As the T-shirt put it, "Even in this New Age two things are crystal clear: there is a God, and I am not Him"!

Third, if there are no real finite selves or "I's," then there is no such thing as an I-Thou relationship between finite selves or between humans and God. Both fellowship and worship become impossible. All alleged I-Thou relations reduce to I. Indeed there are no true changing relations at all, since there are no separate changing with which to relate. Religious experience is impossible in any meaningful sense of the term since all meaningful experience involves something or someone other than oneself with whom one enters the changing experience. If when one is conscious of experiencing God it is

really only an experience internal to the modes or manifestations of God, then he is not really having an experience; only God is having the experience.

Some pantheists hope to avoid this problem by giving humanity a manifestational or emanational status, at least temporarily, as a self. This is true of both Plotinus and Radhakrishnan. Their attempt, however, is unsuccessful because when all is said and done there is no reality in the finite individual that is the individual's own. The individual's selfhood is real only at the point at which it is one with the Absolute. Logically this means that as finite and as individual it is not real, despite all attempts to say that it has some kind of lesser reality. Pantheists who qualify their argument in this way wrongly assume that whatever is not really ultimate is not ultimately or actually real.

Other pantheists, like Alan Watts, appeal to the Christian Trinity as a model, in which there is more than one person in communion and there are I-Thou relations, and yet there is only one being or essence. This move, however, will not suffice, since the persons of the Trinity are not anchored to finite and changing natures. They interrelate in accordance with the perfect and unchanging unity of one absolute and eternal nature that they share. By contrast, finite egos bound to a space-time continuum (our "world") are an entirely different matter. In this case, plurality of persons involves also a plurality of changing essences.

Fourth, the basic metaphysical assumption of monism begs the whole question. From Parmenides to the present, monists of numerous varieties invariably assume a univocal notion of being without justification. This is apparent in Parmenides's premise that things cannot differ in what they have in common (i.e., being), for that is the very respect in which they are identical. If one assumes that being is identical wherever it is found, then of course it follows that being is ultimately one. That is, if being always means exactly the same thing (i.e., univocity of being), then the attempt to show there is more than one being in the universe is futile. Whatever being one points to and however distant and separate it may seem from other beings, in the final analysis they are all identical in their being. Not only is no proof offered for this monistic assumption, but also a pluralistic alternative to it is overlooked—namely, that being is analogous. If being is not entirely the same wherever it is found but is only similar, then there can be more than one being in the universe. That is, there may be different kinds of being—for example, finite and infinite. And as long as the principle of differentiation is within the very being of the finite beings, there can be many beings. Each of these can have its own identity different from the others, but each will have an element of similarity in that each has being. This analogous concept of being is at least a metaphysical possibility, and if it is possible then pantheism is not necessarily true. In brief, the central metaphysical premise of pantheism is the unproved assumption that being is to be understood univocally.

Fifth, the ship of pantheism is wrecked on the reef of evil. Pronouncing evil illusory or less than real is not only hollow to those experiencing evil, but philosophically inadequate as well. If evil is not real, what is the origin of the illusion? Why has it been so persistent? Why is it so universal? And why does it seem so real? As it has been aptly put, why is it that when suffering, one dislikes what one fancies one feels? Or, more seriously, how can evil arise from God, who is absolutely and necessarily good? Making evil a necessary part of God or of the world process that flows necessarily from God does not explain evil; to the contrary, it explains away absolute Good. It makes God both good and evil. Or, as a pantheist would prefer, it puts God beyond both good or evil. But this leads to another serious inadequacy with pantheism.

Sixth, there is neither ground for absolute Good nor an ultimate distinction between good and evil in a pantheistic universe. The ground of all is beyond being and knowing. It is beyond the laws of logic and distinction. Hence, ultimately and really there is no basis for distinguishing between good

and evil. So for God as God nothing is either good or evil, for God is beyond both and contains both in a transcendent way that is manifest in that which flows from him by way of mode, manifestation, or emanation.

Seventh, the pantheistic God is not really personal, as some pantheists claim. Strictly speaking, for pantheism personality is at best a lesser or lower level of God. The Judeo-Christian personal God is a second-class citizen in the heavens. The Absolute as Absolute and Ultimate is beyond personality and consciousness. These are pure anthropomorphisms or at best lesser manifestations of the Supreme. Rather than being the most personal Being and the paradigm for all personality, the pantheistic God is an impersonal force driven by metaphysical necessity and not by volitional and loving choice. God as a loving Father freely bestowing kindness on the world of his creatures is alien to the highest level of religious reality in a pantheistic world. A personal God—if there is one—is at best a lower manifestation or appearance of the highest impersonal reality.

Eighth, the pantheistic God is incomplete without creation; he is dependent on the creation that flows from him for the attainment of the perfections that lie latent in his own infinite potentialities. To borrow Plotinus's illustration, God is like a seed that must unfold in its own creation in order to blossom forth in all its potential. God must create a mirror so that by reflection on his creation he may come to know himself. For Hegel, God comes to self-realization by unfolding in the historical process; history, as it were, is necessary to develop deity.

By way of contrast, the theistic God is eternally conscious and complete and without need for anything to realize latent potentials. Indeed, the traditional theistic God is pure actuality without any potential in his being whatsoever.[381] While a pantheistic God creates out of necessity and need, the theistic God creates out of love and desire.

Ninth, if God is "All," or coextensive in his being with the universe, then pantheism is metaphysically indistinguishable from atheism. Both hold in common that the Whole is a collection of all the finite parts or aspects. Both hold that there is no supernatural realm. The only difference is that the pantheist decides to attribute religious significance to the All and the atheist does not. Philosophically the Whole is identical—namely, one eternal self-contained system of reality.

What is more, statements that include everything, such as "God is All," are vulnerable to the charge that they say nothing, for to say everything of God, including opposites, is to say nothing meaningful of him. Unless some real distinction can be made between the finite and the infinite, good and evil, and so on, nothing significant is being said. Every affirmation must imply by contrast a possible negation in order to be meaningful. Even the general statement "God is being" implies that "God is not nonbeing." But to affirm, as pantheism does, that "God is All and All is God" in the ultimate and absolute sense is equivocal and nonsensical because it contains within it opposites such as good and evil, being and nonbeing.

Tenth, pantheism involves a contradiction within the nature of God as infinite, for if God is infinite and yet somehow shares his being (*ex Deo*) with creation, then either the finite is infinite and the contingent is necessary—which is clearly contradictory—or else the finite and contingent and many are not really finite and contingent and many. Rather, they are one, necessary, and infinite. In short, either absolute monism is clearly self-defeating (first criticism above) or else, if God shares part of his infinite being with creatures, then part of it is lost and becomes less than infinite. It will not suffice for the pantheist to opt for a third alternative—namely, that when God gives being to a creature it is not God's own being that is given but a being separate from it that is created in the creature; this position is not pantheism but theism. The choices within this overall framework, then, appear to be absolute monism, which is self-defeating; contradictory pantheism, which holds that God

remains infinite in his being even when part of his being is given to another; and theism. Some would attempt to avoid this dilemma by opting for a panentheism, which will be discussed in the next chapter. But one thing seems certain: one must move in some direction other than pantheism for a rational and coherent worldview.

Eleventh, pantheism's stress on the unknowability or ineffability of God is self-defeating. The very assertion that God is unknowable in an intellectual way is either meaningless or self-defeating. On the one hand, if that assertion is one that cannot itself be understood in an intellectual way, then it is a meaningless assertion. On the other hand, if the assertion "God is unknowable in an intellectual way" is really understandable in an intellectual way, then it is self-defeating, for in this case pantheists are offering a statement about God to the effect that such statements cannot be made about God. They are making a positive predication about God that claims that predications cannot be made about God in a positive way. Totally negative predications tell one nothing. As even Plotinus admitted, every negative predication implies some positive knowledge.[382]

Some pantheists, like Alan Watts, attempted to avoid this dilemma by admitting that their writings are not informative about God. Besides signifying that their writings are meaningless, this implies that the whole communication process is fruitless. Why write? Pantheists do write, and often write long books. Furthermore, it is self-defeating for pantheists to communicate to us their view of God only to inform us that they have not done so. Despite what some pantheists say, what they actually do is use language to communicate to us a view of God that in turn they say is incommunicable.

Twelfth, most pantheists, particularly the stricter ones, deny the validity of sense experience. They believe our senses are deceiving us into believing there is multiplicity and materiality when actually there is only unity and immateriality. However, virtually all pantheists are inconsistent at this point since they expect others to trust the sense of sound when pantheists are speaking and trust their sense of sight when pantheists are writing. The truth is that they cannot even express their view to others without trusting that their senses are helping others understand them.

Summary and Conclusion

Pantheistic emphases provide numerous insights into the nature of reality, including the absoluteness of God, his immanence in the world, and the unity of being. Pantheism attempts to provide a consistent, comprehensive, and all-embracing philosophy. In addition, many pantheists have provided valuable insights into intuitive epistemology and the need of negation in religious language in order to preserve the transcendent and infinite nature of God. On the interpersonal and social level many pantheists have stressed the need for tolerance and the desire for a spiritual unity among humans. All of these, and more, are commendable contributions by proponents of the pantheistic viewpoint.

However, when we consider pantheism as a metaphysical system, we find numerous problems, some of which seem insurmountable. Most significant is that pantheism is self-defeating. If it were true that God is actually unknowable and inexpressible by language or thought, then pantheists could not have so expressed their view to us. The fact that pantheists in writing and speaking do express their view proves that their claim about God's unknowability is self-destructive. Further, pantheism cannot even express its view without conflicting with its own premises. It denies the real existence of finite beings and destroys the basis for a genuine religious experience. What is more, it fails to explain the origin, universality, and persistence of what it considers to be the illusion of evil. Finally, pantheism is often built on an intuitive or mystical epistemology (see chap. 4).

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12
Panentheism

Pan-en-theism (all-*in*-God) is not to be confused with pantheism (God *is* all), although they have some things in common. *Panentheism* is the belief that God is *in* the world (i.e., universe) the way that a soul or mind is in a body; pantheism is the belief that God *is* the world and the world is God. There are many names for this worldview. Some label it *dipolar theism* since, in contrast to traditional, monopolar theism, it holds that there are two poles to God—namely, an actual, temporal pole and a potential, eternal pole. In the contemporary world, the major form of this position is represented in *process theology*, which holds that the finite, dipolar God is in a continual process of change. In this form panentheism is sometimes called *organicism* because of its stress on the organic relationship of all factors of the world process.

An Exposition of Panentheism

The roots of panentheism are not in the modern world. The pre-Socratic philosopher Diogenes (fifth century BC) held that God is to world as soul is to body, a root model that is still in currency among panentheists. Further, the ancient philosopher Heracleitus believed that the world is in process, claiming that "no person steps into the same river twice." But panentheism, as such, emanates from the early twentieth-century philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. His successors Charles Hartshorne, Shubert Ogden, John Cobb, and Lewis Ford have carried on the tradition. The view has heavily influenced a contemporary movement among some evangelical thinkers called Open Theism or Free Will Theism, led by the late Clark Pinnock,[383] John Sanders, and Gregory Boyd.

The Process Panentheism of Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947)

Many influences converged in the Whiteheadian view of God. The ancient philosopher Heracleitus had noted that "no person steps into the same river twice; for other and yet other waters are ever flowing on." This process view of the world was later developed by Hegel into a developmental unfolding of God in history. Herbert Spencer expanded the Darwinian biological hypothesis into a cosmic evolutionism. Following the process evolution of Spencer, Henri Bergson developed a creative evolution involving spontaneous "leaps" produced by the élan vital (life force), which he later identified as God.[384] This identification of God with the evolutionary world process was a significant moment in the development of process panentheism. Even before Bergson's identification, Samuel Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity* had presented one of the pioneer works on a process view of God. But despite the various contributions of these early process panentheists, the award for the first systematic presentation of dipolar theism is rightly given to Alfred North Whitehead for his classic *Process and Reality*, followed by *Adventures of Ideas* and *Modes of Thought*. It is to Whitehead's understanding of God that we now turn our attention.

Process and Permanence. For Whitehead, the world is constituted by both process and permanence. The permanent element in the temporal world is the potential element (called "eternal objects") and the process element is the actual element (called "actual entities"). "Continuity concerns what is potential; whereas actuality is incurably atomic," he wrote, for "it belongs to the nature of a 'being' that it is a potential for every 'becoming.' This is the 'principle of relativity.'" A kindred principle, the "principle of progress," states: "How an actual entity becomes constitutes what the actual entity is. . . . Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming.'"[385]

Process, however, cannot stand alone in a metaphysical system. Permanence must be snatched out of flux; those who disjoin the two elements find no solution to plain facts, Whitehead argued. Permanence is found on two levels: (1) In the temporal world, permanence is found in the eternal objects, or what Whitehead calls "forms of definiteness," which resemble platonic forms except that they are constitutively connected with the sensible world (whereas Plato's Forms were not). So, for Whitehead, "it is not 'substance' which is permanent, but 'form.'" (2) In the nontemporal or eternal realm, the element of permanence is found in what is called "the primordial nature of God"—that is, the nature of God as the orderer of all eternal objects. In the temporal world, however, actual entities and eternal objects are, respectively, the process and permanent sides of reality. An understanding of each of these is crucial to comprehending Whitehead's process panentheism.

1. *Actual Entities.* The most fundamental reality, and the only actuality, in Whitehead's system is what he calls "actual entities." They are the "final real things of which the world is made up." For "every actual occasion exhibits itself as a process; it is a becomingness." It is an "event" in which the outcome is a drop or "unit of experience." So "in the becoming of an actual entity, the potential unity of many entities—actual and non-actual—acquires the real unity of the one actual entity; so that the actual entity is the real concrescence of many potentials." That is to say, "events become and perish. In their becoming they are immediate and they vanish into the past. They are gone; they have perished."[386] In short, they are becoming but never really are. Hence, the doctrine of becoming is balanced with the doctrine of perishing. But once they have perished, actual occasions pass only "from the immediacy of being into the not-being of immediacy." But this does not mean they are nothing, for "they remain stubborn fact."[387] What the actual entity loses subjectively by perishing, it gains objectively. Forms suffer changing relations; they perpetually perish subjectively but become immortal objectively. They lose final causality, which is the internal principle of unrest in things, and acquire efficient causality.

Once an actual entity perishes and becomes objectively immortal, it can act as an efficient cause for other actual entities that are in the process of "concrescence," or coming to be, for all efficient causality moves from the past to the present like tradition. Final causality, on the contrary, operates in the present. It is the "subjective aim" of the actual entity—namely, that which controls its process of becoming. In Whitehead's words, "The subjective aim is this subject determining its own self-creation." This it does by determining its own "subjective form," that is to say, by determining *how* it will "prehend" its data.[388]

Prehension is simply the "process of 'feeling' the many data, so as to absorb them into the unity of one individual 'satisfaction.'" There are two kinds of prehension: negative and positive. Since the "principle of relativity" shows that every actual entity has a definite relationship to every other actual entity, it must be either absorbing (positively) or rejecting (negatively) them. A positive prehension is a definite inclusion of another item in the universe, and a negative prehension is a definite exclusion of items from any positive contribution to the subject's own internal constitution. If the prehension is of another actual entity, it is called "physical prehension." If it is of an eternal object, it is called

"conceptual prehension." All actual entities are dipolar for Whitehead, involving both a physical pole and a conceptual pole.[389]

A fundamental concept to Whitehead's understanding of actual entities is what he calls the "ontological principle." This principle declares that "every decision is referable to one or more actual entities, because in separation from actual entities there is nothing, merely nonentity." Stated otherwise, "Everything must be somewhere," or, "No actual entity, then no reason," for "it is a contradiction in terms to assume that some explanatory fact can float into the actual world out of nonentity." Hence, there is nothing more fundamental than an actual entity. "There is no going behind actual entities to find anything more real. . . . God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space."[390]

2. *Eternal Objects.* Actuality is the element of process in the temporal world, but "eternal objects" provide the element of permanence. Eternal objects are like "platonic forms" that ingress into the temporal world from the realm of eternal possibility. "Thus the metaphysical status of an eternal object is that of a possibility for an actuality." They are like abstract "universals" that are understood by their concrete manifestation in the temporal world. Hence, sounds, colors, or scents are called "sense objects." As such they are "forms of definiteness" or "pure potentials" for the specific determination of facts, so "there is no character belonging to the actual apart from its exclusive determination by selected eternal objects." Since an actual entity may be definite in more than one way, it may possess more than one form of definiteness or eternal object. And even though there are no novel eternal objects, and these eternal objects cannot change, nonetheless there is variance from one occasion to another in respect to the difference of modes of ingression. That is, while an eternal object is just itself in whatever mode of realization it is involved, yet there may be "more than one grade of realization." The eternal objects are in themselves simple, but they may be formed into complex groups and relationships called "propositions."[391]

Because eternal objects are simple, they may be negatively prehended *in toto*; because they are pure potentials, they can be prehended negatively, for "the actualities *have* to be felt [positively prehended], while the pure potentials *can* be dismissed [prehended negatively]." In their function as objects, this is the great distinction between actual entities and eternal objects. The former are a stubborn matter of actual fact, while the latter never lose their nature as potential.[392]

God and the World. With this bit of Whiteheadian metaphysics in mind, we are prepared to understand his dipolar panentheism. God too is an actual entity with two poles: an actual pole that is the world and a potential pole beyond the world. The latter is called God's "primordial nature," and the former his "consequent nature."

1. *God's Primordial Nature.* Even though eternal objects are the forms of definiteness for actual entities, they are in themselves indefinite and unordered. They are pure potentials, and as such they cannot order and relate themselves; only an actual entity can do that. But since not all eternal objects have ingressed into the temporal world, Whitehead finds it necessary to introduce a nontemporal actual entity (i.e., God in his primordial nature) as the orderer of eternal objects. He wrote, "If there be a relevance of what in the temporal world is unrealized, the relevance must express a fact of togetherness in the formal constitution of a non-temporal actuality" (i.e., God in his primordial nature). That is, "by reason of the actuality of this primordial valuation of pure potentials, each eternal object has a definite, effective relevance to each concrescent process," for "apart from such ordering, there would be a complete disjunction of eternal objects unrealized in the world." As orderer of eternal objects, God is like a backstage director who organizes and lines up the actors, making them "relevant" for their moment of "ingression" on the stage of the temporal world. Without

such ordering, there would be chaos among the unrealized eternal objects and no orderly ingression into the world.[393]

The foregoing illustration should not mislead one into thinking there is a real difference between God's primordial nature and the order of eternal objects. They are in fact the same. "Viewed as primordial, he is the unlimited conceptual realization of the absolute wealth of potentiality. In this aspect, he is not *before* all creation, but *with* all creation."[394] This is why God is a finite but primordial creature who does not create eternal objects, for his nature requires them in the same sense that they require him. Without God, there would be no order among eternal objects, and without eternal objects there would be no primordial nature of God.

2. *God's Consequent Nature.* Like all actual entities, God has a dipolar nature. The conceptual pole of God is the order of eternal objects; the physical pole is the order of actual entities. The former is the permanent and nontemporal dimension of God, and the latter is the process and temporal pole of God. There are two reasons in Whitehead for positing a consequent nature of God: (1) Like every other actual entity, God must be dipolar, for the physical pole is needed to complete the vision of the conceptual pole. That is, since God's primordial nature is "deficient" and "unconscious," it needs the consequent nature to realize its own subjective aim or self-creative urge. It demands the concrete fulfillment of its conceptual vision. (2) God's consequent nature is necessary because of the principle of relativity, which holds that every entity in the universe must be related to every other entity. Since God in his primordial nature is relative only to eternal objects, there must be another "side" to God that can be related to actual entities. "Thus," Whitehead wrote, "by reason of the relativity of all things, there is a reaction of the world on God."[395] So as the primordial pole answers to God's relevance to eternal objects, the consequent pole manifests his relation to actual entities. Thus by virtue of both poles God is related to all items in the universe, both potential and actual.

3. *God's "Superject" Nature and Evil.* The consequent nature of God as enriched or satisfied by prehensions in the temporal world is sometimes referred to as the "superject" nature of God. It is the repository of all achieved value in the universe and is available for prehension by other actual entities. As the storehouse of all that God has accomplished in the actual world, it contains the permanent and progressive achievement of good in the universe as envisioned by God in his primordial nature. It is by virtue of God's immanence in the temporal world that the world is saved from chaos. The world "passes into the immediacy of his own life" by "a tenderness which loses nothing that can be saved." Of course not everything can be saved. Some things simply cannot be salvaged because they do not fit into a given concrescence. Evil, then, is that which is inconsistent or incompatible with the total process by which nothing is lost but is "saved by its relation to the complete whole." Not every pigment can be used to complete the envisioned painting; many will be incorporated and others must be rejected, but the completed whole will be achieved with as little exclusion (evil) as possible for a finite God who is working with the given of this world in process.[396]

4. *God and Creativity.* Since each actual entity is separate and even causally independent from every other actual entity, there must be something that provides a "definite bond" between all actual entities and yet explains how each is distinct from the other. Whitehead calls this principle "creativity." It is his attempt to relate pluralistic subjects to one another while avoiding monism. Creativity "is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which are the universe conjunctively." Indeed, "every actual entity, including God, is a creature transcended by creativity it qualifies." However, creativity is "without a character

of its own in exactly the same sense in which the Aristotelian 'matter' is without character of its own." But creativity "is not an entity in the sense in which occasions or eternal objects are entities." Rather, it is more of a general metaphysical character that underlies all actual entities. Like Spinoza's infinite substance, it underlies all the individual modes that are its characteristics. Whitehead contended that "in all philosophic theory there is an ultimate which is actual in virtue of its accidents. . . . In the philosophy of organism this ultimate is termed 'creativity,' and God is its primordial, non-temporal accident." Accordingly, "no value is to be ascribed to the underlying activity [creativity] as divorced from the matter-of-fact real world."[397]

Creativity is a kind of "substance" that is real only by virtue of its "accidents." It is the potential unity that binds together the actual unity of the world. Like Plato's "receptacle," it imposes common relationship on all that happens. It can thus be termed a real potentiality or the actualization of a passive capacity of the whole world process. Creativity is the actualization of potentiality, and the process of actualization is an actual entity or occasion. Thus creativity is the real potentiality that binds together the many actualities of the universe into the form of their own novel unity. As such, "creativity is the principle of novelty" that introduces new patterns of definiteness by forming a disjunctive unity into a new oneness.[398]

5. *God and Negative Prehensions.* Creativity is not only the principle of potential unity; by way of negative prehensions, it is also the principle of actual separation. Negative prehension provides the "machinery" by which creativity operates, for unless some things were eliminated from a given process of concrescence, that actual entity would become everything, which would be monism. It is only by definite exclusion of other actual entities from a particular actual entity that monism is avoided. So negative prehensions are absolutely essential to pluralism. They are a "positive fact" in the coming to be of every actual entity because what is definitely excluded is at least as important as what is definitely included. As the sculptor forms a statue, what is cut away from a block of stone is as important as what remains. In this sense, we may understand Whitehead when he writes that "the negative judgment is the peak of mentality."[399]

God has no negative prehensions of eternal objects, since all potentials are included within his vision of reality. No potential is absent from the unity of God's subjective aim. It is in this way that all things are *one* potentially while remaining *many* actually; reality is potentially monistic but actually pluralistic. God, in his dipolar nature, corresponds to these two dimensions. He is the dipolar combination of the eternal potentials and the temporal actualities; he combines both the infinite vision and the finite realization. God has both abstract conceptualization and concrete materialization. God is both *beyond* the world in his eternal potentiality and *in* the world in his temporal actuality. The eternal and unchanging potentials of God are being actualized within the changing space-time world.

The Process Panentheism of Charles Hartshorne (1897–2000)

Process panentheism has taken two main courses since Whitehead: the empirical (represented by Bernard Loomer, Bernard Meland, and Henry Wieman) and the rational (championed by Charles Hartshorne, John Cobb, and Shubert Ogden). Hartshorne defends his dipolar theism by way of the ontological argument, in contrast to the more empirically grounded approach of Whitehead. A comparison with Whitehead will help us to focus on the significant contribution of Hartshorne to panentheism.

The Similar Dipolar Model. For both Whitehead and Hartshorne,[400] God has two poles: an actual pole and a potential pole. The potential pole is the order of all that *can be*, and the actual pole is the order of all that *is*. The former is God's "mind," and the latter is his "body." The potential pole is God's conceptual vision, and the actual pole is the physical realization of that vision. Since the actual world is in constant process of becoming and perishing, the actual pole of God is perishable, whereas the potential pole is imperishable. Further, the potential pole is both absolute and eternal, but the actual pole is relative and temporal. The potential pole is infinite, and the actual pole is finite; God, then, is potentially infinite but actually finite. God has one pole of changeless possibility and another of changing activity. The former is called his primordial nature, and the latter is his consequent nature. For both Whitehead and Hartshorne, then, God is dipolar.

The Contrast between Dipolar and Monopolar Concepts of God. Both Whitehead and Hartshorne would agree in contrasting their dipolar model of God to the monopolar model of classical theism. In the classical view, God is *Creator* of the world; for panentheism God is only the *Director* of world process. For theism, God created the world out of nothing (ex nihilo); for panentheism, creation is out of something eternally there at the other pole (*ex materia*). It follows that a theistic God is in sovereign control *over* the world, whereas the panentheistic God is working in cooperation *with* the world. In the former view, God is *independent* of the world; in the latter, God is *interdependent* with the world. Further, the theistic God is unchanging in essence; the dipolar God is constantly changing with the world. With regard to perfection, the God of theism possesses all possible perfections eternally and concurrently, whereas the God of panentheism attains perfections *successively* and endlessly. In all of these ways, both Whitehead and Hartshorne are in basic agreement against classical theism.

The Methodological Differences between Hartshorne and Whitehead. The most basic differences between Hartshorne and Whitehead are not metaphysical but methodological. Whitehead's methodology is basically empirical by contrast with Hartshorne's highly rational approach to reality. Whereas Whitehead begins with descriptive generalizations, Hartshorne starts with analytic concepts. The former is more scientific in methodology, and the latter more logical. Whitehead's starting point is hypothetical, based only on empirical necessity or adequacy; Hartshorne's point of departure is categorical, based on logical necessity. Therefore, like scientific hypotheses, Whitehead's position could be falsified by empirical inadequacy, but Hartshorne's can be rejected only by showing contradictions within it. In general, Whitehead is more a posteriori in approach, and Hartshorne is more a priori. In keeping with this difference, it is not surprising that Whitehead has a kind of teleological argument for God's existence, but Hartshorne is a stout defender of the ontological argument.

Hartshorne's Ontological Argument and His Dipolar God. According to Hartshorne, all thought must refer to something beyond itself that is either possible or actual, for wherever there is meaning, there must be something meant. The only thoughts that are less than possible are contradictory ones. Total illusion is impossible, since illusion necessarily presupposes a backdrop of reality. The existence of a necessary being is at least possible—there is nothing contradictory in the concept of a being that cannot *not* be. However, with a necessary being the only way it can be is to be necessarily; a necessary being cannot have a mere possible existence. It follows, therefore, that a necessary being must necessarily exist. So all meaning implicitly affirms God in reference either to what God *has done* (God's immanence)—namely, God's consequent nature—or else in reference to what God *can do* (God's transcendence)—namely, God's primordial nature. Hence, nothing either possible or actual can have meaning without reference to God. Without God as the universal ground for meaning, there

is no meaning in the universe. Nothing can have objective meaning unless there is a realm that is objectively meaningful. Hence, the only way to oppose the ontological argument is to make an absolute disjunction between thought and reality. This, according to Hartshorne, is impossible. Meaning and reality must meet at some point; this point we call "God," who is the dipolar ground for all reality both possible and actual.

The Metaphysical Differences between Whitehead and Hartshorne. Hartshorne modified the Whiteheadian concept of God in a number of ways. One of the more significant ones is that whereas Whitehead considered God a single actual entity, Hartshorne viewed God as a society of actual entities.[401] For Hartshorne, God is a cosmic Mind resident in a Body (the world). A mind, for Hartshorne, is really a society of many thoughts. But since Whitehead's claim—God is an actual entity—made it possible for him to claim that God is an actual entity like all others and not an exception to metaphysical principles, Hartshorne must maintain that God is modally different from the world and not univocally the same. God is a necessary being, and all others are contingent. There is, then, an analogous relation between God and the world as mind is to body.

There is also a distinct difference between Whitehead and Hartshorne on how God grounds the world. For the former, the world is based on God's subjective aim—that is, God's vision for this particular world. For Hartshorne, however, the world is grounded in God as the logically necessary basis for all contingency. The former is concerned only with God as the ground for this particular world; the latter sees God as the universal and necessary ground for all possible worlds. In this respect, Whitehead's God is the universal subject, but Hartshorne's God is the universal object or objective reference point for all meaning. Thus while in Whitehead only actual entities can be causes or reasons for things, in Hartshorne, God, who is a series or society of entities, is the cause of the world. In short, Whitehead's God is only concretely necessary to explain this particular world, but Hartshorne's God is universally and logically necessary to explain all possible worlds.

John Cobb's (1925–) Modifications of Dipolar Theism

Cobb belongs in the overall process panentheism of Whitehead and Hartshorne, but he offers two significant changes. First, Cobb rejects the implied disjunction between the two separate poles of God in the Whiteheadian scheme of things. God, like man, is a unity and acts as a unity and not in just one pole as such. For instance, God's subjective aim or vision for everything is not to be limited only to his primordial nature but is to be associated as well with his consequent nature.[402]

Cobb's second modification of panentheism relates to the initial phase of God's subjective aim. He takes a less "Calvinistic" view than Whitehead, who contended that the initial phase of the subjective aim is derived from God. Not so, Cobb argues, for if every subjective aim is derived exclusively from God, we cannot avoid determinism. Hence, "the subjective aim of the new occasion must be formed by some synthesis or adaptation of these aims for which it [the actual entity] is itself finally responsible."[403]

Cobb agrees with Hartshorne against Whitehead that God is a society (or living person) and not a single actual entity for several reasons. First, if God were a single entity, he could never know satisfaction (which is a culmination of a process involving many actual entities), as other persons can. Further, God's causal efficacy for the world is more like that of completed occasions than that of a single actual entity. Finally, because God is a society of entities, we can explain how God can remember everything from the past, because he is knowing himself and never experiences the loss of his own identity.

Like Whitehead, Cobb finds it necessary to posit "creativity" as the ground of everything, including God. Creativity is "that apart from which nothing can be . . . , the actuality of every actual entity."[404]

Shubert Ogden's (1928–) Contribution to Panentheism

Whitehead came to panentheism from the field of science and math, Hartshorne approached it out of a logical context, and Shubert Ogden arrived by way of Bultmannian existentialism. Ogden felt Heidegger was right that one cannot understand the world (objectively) without a prior understanding of one's own existence in the world (subjectively). Bultmann convinced Ogden that modern (secular) humanity has forced us to demythologize the Bible. The net result of demythologization is two parties: God and humanity. Heidegger adequately analyzed humanity, but Hartshorne is the key to understanding God. Ogden has several reasons for choosing Hartshorne. First, Hartshorne's process theology avoids the antinomies, or contradictions, that Ogden sees in traditional theism (see chap. 15 below). Second, Hartshorne proved for Ogden the necessary theocentric counterpart of Bultmann's anthropocentrism.

Ogden's Dipolar Model of God. God, for Ogden, has two poles: one of absoluteness and one of relatedness. Thus God is both absolute and relative.

1. *God's Relatedness.* As relative, God is related to all that is. The world, made up of many actual entities, is the body of God. God is related to the world as "I" am to my body—namely, by direct internal relations. Thus God's sphere of action is the whole universe. In accordance with Whitehead's principle of relativity, every actual entity is related to every other actual entity by either positive or negative prehension. God is related to all by "sympathetic participation," which synthesizes in each new occasion the whole of achieved actuality.[405]

God gives value to our lives in two ways. First, God is responsible for the concrescence of actual entities that constitute our bodies and for the structure and order of the actual world. In this way, God can call forth our life's worth in the world. God alone makes life worthwhile; without God absurdity is unavoidable. Second, God gives to our lives eternal value. All actual entities return to God and become immortal as eternal objects. God makes an "imperishable difference," and in God our lives "find their ultimate justification."[406]

Since the world is God's body, God's reality as an actual entity depends on the world. This does not mean that God is dependent for the fact *that* he is, but only for *what* he is. God's nature depends on "what actual state of the infinite number of states possible for him is in fact actualized."[407] So God's body is contingent even though it is necessary for him to have a body that is in fact eternal.

2. *God's Absoluteness.* Ogden understands God's absoluteness by analogy—that is, by taking univocal notions and applying them to God in an eminent way.[408] Ogden distinguishes God's absoluteness from the traditional theistic sense of the word. His dipolar God is absolute in terms of his relativity—that is, by "relative absoluteness." First of all, God is absolute by his inclusion of all beings, for to experience is to experience God. Further, God is absolute in relations by virtue of his internal relatedness to every actual entity in the universe. God's perfectness lies in his continual openness to change—that is, in successive perfecting. God is not statically completed perfection, as in classical theism, but a "dynamic maximum of possibilities."[409] Also, God is absolute in knowledge in the sense that at every stage in the ongoing process, everything that exists is within God's sphere of relation. Finally, God is absolute in his temporality. God is the "eminently temporal one." His perfections are continually increasing, because "anything we do to advance the real good

either of ourselves or of one another is done quite literally to 'the glory of God,' as an imperishable contribution to his ever-growing perfection."[410]

In short, God is absolute in that his "being related to all others is itself relative to nothing but is the absolute ground of any and all real relationships." His absoluteness is an absolute relatedness to all else, and, hence, his perfection is a perfect relativity with all the value in the temporal world.

Ogden's Argument for God's Existence. For Ogden, God's existence is morally necessary. He agrees with Hartshorne that it is impossible to deny that meaning has a necessary ground. Ogden, however, seems to develop this thinking in a kind of moral argument for God's existence that may be summarized as follows:[411]

1. All judgments imply meaning, value, and purpose in the universe.
2. It is self-defeating to deny the possibility of making meaningful judgments.
3. Hence, there must be meaning, value, and purpose in the universe.
4. But meaning requires a ground; value requires a value giver; and so on.
5. Hence, there exists a ground of meaning, a giver of value (God), and so on.

There seems to be a teleological element in this argument, but Ogden rejects the traditional teleological argument on the ground that it points to a God "Wholly other" than the world. For Ogden, the true view of God "is that God is nothing external to the world's order but is that order itself fully understood—analogous to the way in which the human self or person is not anything merely additional to the unified behavior of its body but is what enables us to understand and account for such unified behavior."[412]

Ogden's Rejection of Classical Theism: The Antinomies. Ogden sees three insoluble contradictions in the traditional notion of God as a timeless, changeless, and unrelated being. These he calls the antinomies of creation, of service, and of relationship.

1. *The Antinomy of Creation.* The classical theistic God is a necessary being, and his act of creation is one with his eternal and necessary being. And yet the contingent world is supposed to flow from him in a free and nonnecessary way. This, for Ogden, leads to the "hopeless contradiction of a wholly necessary creation of a wholly contingent world."[413] In other words, if God's will is identical with his necessary essence, then creation must flow necessarily from it. This is contrary to the traditional theistic claim that creation flows from God freely and contingently. Therefore, classical theism must be corrected by Ogden's neoclassical theism by means of the doctrine of God's relative necessity. God is not absolutely necessary, and, hence, creation of a contingent world need not be absolutely necessary.

2. *The Antinomy of Service.* There is a contradiction in classical theism, Ogden claims, between God's absolute and complete perfection on the one hand and humanity's service for God on the other hand. God is conceived by theists as "statically complete perfection" that can be neither increased nor diminished by anything else. Yet theists are called on inconsistently to live their lives in service "for" God. But if God cannot increase in perfection, then no significant service can ever be rendered "for" God. But it is not so with the process God of panentheism; that God can be significantly served, for whatever we do for him actually enriches him and increases his value and perfections.

3. *The Antinomy of Relationship.* This is the antimony most often repeated by panentheists, and it involves the supposed isolation of the theistic God from the world. The God of classical theism is the changeless and independent cause of all other things; the world depends on God, but God does not depend on the world. But, according to Ogden, all genuine relationships involve mutual dependence,

a reciprocal give and take. From this, it follows for Ogden that the world is related to God but God is not really related to the world. Theism involves a God who is in monopolar isolation from the real world. Such is not the case with the mutual interdependence of the panentheistic God of Ogden. It is for these reasons that Ogden feels impelled to reject the God of classical, monopolar theism for the God of dipolar theism.

A Summary of Major Tenets of Panentheism

There are significant intramural debates among panentheists as to both methodology and metaphysics. However, our concern here is to summarize the major points common to most panentheists or at least characteristic of the movement as a whole.

First, God is related to the world as a soul or mind is related to a body; the world is God's body, his physical pole. God is intimately and internally related with the time-space world. God is not identical with the world, as in pantheism; nor is God actually distinct from and independent of the world, as in theism. God is identical with the world in his body, but there is more to God than the world. God also transcends the world as a mind transcends or is more than a body.

Second, God has two poles: a potential pole that is beyond the world and an actual pole that is the physical world. God is absolute, eternal, and infinite in potentiality but is relative, temporal, and finite in actuality. The imperishable pole is God's primordial nature, and the changing pole is God's consequent nature. But God—like all actualities—is dipolar in construction.

Third, the world is not created ex nihilo—that is, out of nothing; it is formed *ex materia*—that is, out of something eternally there at the other pole. God, then, is not a world Creator but a cosmic Director. Hence, God is not sovereign *over* the world but rather works in cooperation *with* the world. Both matter and mind are eternal. Mind does not come from matter, as in atheism; nor does matter come from mind, as in classical theism. Rather, matter is eternally directed by Mind.

Fourth, God and the world are interrelated and interdependent. The world depends on God for its necessary ground, and God depends on the world for his manifestation or embodiment. The world depends on God for its existence, and God depends on the world for his essence. God and the world are as interrelated as mind and body in the modern scientific and organistic sense of the terms.

Fifth, God is continually growing in perfections due to the increase in value in the world (his body) resulting from human effort. All achieved value not only significantly enriches God, but is immortalized and stored in God's consequent nature. The universe as God's body is undergoing perpetual perfection and enlargement of value.

Sixth, evil is an incompatibility with the given possibility of world process. Evil will not be ultimately defeated and destroyed; not all good that is possible is actually achievable. God will overcome all evil that it is possible to defeat with our cooperation. But God is finite, and it is not possible to overcome *all* evil. Hence, there will be no final or inevitable triumph.

An Evaluation of Panentheism as a Worldview

Panentheism provides some extremely valuable insights into the nature of reality, particularly as a corrective of some forms of theism and as an alternative to pantheism. First, some of the more important contributions will be noted.

Some Positive Contributions of Panentheistic Thought

Panentheists do not lack in either the ability to see problem areas in other worldviews or in the attempt to construct a positive alternative to them. Some contributions in each of these areas may be noted briefly.

First, panentheists present a commendably strong argumentative type of metaphysics. Their arguments for God vary from ontological (Hartshorne) to teleological (Whitehead) to moral (Ogden), as do those of classical theists. And panentheists continually attempt to present a reasoned approach to reality, as opposed to the purely experiential or fideistic positions. Panentheists rightly recognize the unavoidability of doing metaphysics, and they attempt to do it in a way subject to truth tests.

Second, panentheism avoids the self-defeating identification of God and the world involved in pantheism (see chap. 11). God is not identical with the world, although God is intimately related to it. God is *in* the world, but panentheists reject the pantheist's view that God *is* the world. God transcends the world in a way not provided for in pantheism.

Third, panentheism provides important insights into the nature of God's interaction with the world. It rightly stresses the significance of God's real relationship with the world. God is intimately and really relating and interacting with the world on a two-way street of communication. Without this facet of personal interaction, any concept of God as personal is seriously lacking.

Fourth, from the former contribution follows an appropriate emphasis on the immanence of God. God is really *in* the world; God is not "Wholly other" or merely beyond the world. The world is not external to and independent of God; without God there would be no world. Only by God's immanence in the world is it saved from chaos.

Fifth, panentheism points up the need to explain that the dynamic God of Christian revelation is more than purely static essentialistic Greek categories. The God of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures is more than a static, unchangeable Essence or a platonic Super-Form; he is a personal God of ceaseless creative activity. God actively sustains the creative world process and is active in history and manifest in nature. To explain the Christian God in pure Greek categories of Being is to dress him up in the straightjacket of essentialism, rather than to see him in the light of his dynamic and changing actions and interpersonal relationships.

More insights can be gained through the writings of panentheists, including an explanation of novelty and creativity, of the operations of a natural theology, of the need for analogous God-talk, and of the nature and operations of the incarnate and cosmic Christ. Space does not permit expanded discussion here.

Some Criticisms of Panentheism as a Worldview

We must now shift focus to the inadequacy of panentheism as a metaphysical model or worldview. Panentheism fails as a world and life view for several reasons.

First, panentheism's dipolar concept of God is inadequate. Cobb saw this and struggled to overcome it to some degree. But there is no way to overcome it without overhauling it in the direction of theism. Fundamentally, if God has both an actual pole and a potential pole, one is faced with disturbing metaphysical questions. How can God actualize his own potentialities? Potentialities cannot actualize themselves any more than empty cups can fill themselves. Capacities do not fulfill themselves; they must be activated by something outside themselves. Anything passing from

potentiality to actuality, from what is not to what is, depends on some actuality to ground it. Nothing does not produce something; possibilities to exist do not materialize on their own.

The attempt to avoid this problem by positing creativity as a ground in which God, as the primordial creature, finds it possible to actualize his own potentials, will not help the panentheistic cause. It is self-destructive to the system to posit something like Whitehead's "creativity" with reality status outside the dipolar actual entities of the world. Only actual entities actually exist in the world, according to Whitehead, and beyond the world only potentialities exist—namely, eternal objects. Creativity cannot be a real ground in a Whiteheadian system; only actual entities are real causes. Should a panentheist wish to revise the Whiteheadian system by giving a reality status to something beyond God in which God is grounded, the panentheist's "God" turns out not to be God after all. If there is a real creative ground for the dipolar "God," then it is this pure actuality beyond the dipolar potentiality-actuality that is really God. In short, panentheism needs a theistic God in order to ground its "God," which turns out after all not to be God but to be a giant creature needing a more ultimate and real cause of itself.

Second, not only is the dipolar God less than ultimate; this God is also not really absolute and unchanging. But both absoluteness and unchangingness are necessary metaphysical conclusions. Not everything can be relative; all that is relative must be relative to something that is not relative—that is, to something that is absolute in itself. Everything cannot be to-another unless there is something that is in-itself. Likewise, change makes no sense unless there is the unchanging basis by which change is measured. If all were changing, there would be no way to measure the change. But on the admitted ground that there is real change, the panentheistic metaphysics must be pushed to an unchanging ground for all change, including the change occurring in its "God."

At best, the God of panentheism is only potentially absolute, for it is only the potential pole of this God that is beyond the relative and changing world. However, a potential absolute is not actually absolute, and neither will it serve as a reference point for what is actually relative and changing. Whatever has a potentiality can change, since it has the potentiality to be other than what it is. But as the first criticism above observed, whatever has a potentiality cannot actualize itself. Hence, there must be beyond every potentiality-actuality (including the panentheistic "God") a pure actuality to ground it. But whatever is pure actuality with no potentiality at all cannot change, for there must be a potential or possibility for change or else change cannot occur. Hence, this pure actuality (which is how many theists understand God) cannot change.

Third, the panentheistic theodicy (explanation of evil) is inadequate. It will suffice here merely to summarize some of the central objections leveled against the panentheistic solution to evil. (1) In view of the apparent permanence of natural laws and the persistence of evil, what guarantee is there that a limited, finite God can ever achieve a better world? (2) Of what value is it to individual humans that a God is allegedly being enriched by the storing of value achieved in the world? The serial appearance of maximal good over the next billions of years is of little profit to individuals now and is surely of no enduring value to those who do not survive with individual immortality but only as an eternal object. (3) Why does a God who cannot ultimately triumph over evil engage in such a wasteful project? God's personal enrichment at humanity's expense scarcely seems to be a worthy reason. If a God is in no sense free to stop the process or is unable to see the eventual consequences, then we are led to another criticism. (4) How can anyone worship a God so impotent that he cannot even call the whole thing off? Is not such a God so paralyzed as to be perilous? (5) How can the panentheistic God achieve a better world via human cooperation when most humans are totally unaware of such a God or his purposes? (6) How can such a finite and limited God assure us that

there is any real growth in value in the universe? The world process, as it is available to our understanding, does not manifest the alleged growth in value, nor does the supposed enrichment of this God, which is allegedly available to us appear to make increasing good in the world any easier for us. (7) Finally, does the supposed increase of value in the general process justify the countless numbers of individual evils suffered to gain it? What significance is there in suffering for the individual?

Fourth, the basic presuppositions of panentheism are mistaken. For one thing, the whole system is built on a misapplication of an anthropomorphic dipolar model of God's relation to the world, an application according to which that relation is analogous to the relation of the soul (or mind) of a human being to the body. This is a classic error of humans creating God in their own image. Further, panentheists confuse God's unchanging *attributes* with his changing *activities*. Thus what God *is* is reduced to what God *does*. There is activity but no Actor, movement but no Mover, creation but no Creator. Beginning with an anthropomorphic dipolar model of God, panentheism unsurprisingly produces a God who is finite; limited in knowledge, goodness, and power; and in possession of a physical body like the rest of us. Whatever else may be said of this whittling down of God to humanity's level and form, it surely does not yield the shape of the God presented in the Bible.

Fifth, the claim that the God of panentheism is the God of the Bible is unfounded. That the Bible speaks of God as engaging in temporal and changing *actions* is unquestionable. Indeed, the Bible uses many evocative metaphors of God drawn from human analogies. God is said to have "repented" (Jon. 3:10 RSV), to use his "arm" (Ps. 136:12) and "eyes" (Heb. 4:13). But surely no reasonable interpretation of Scripture would take these any more literally than the symbols that speak of God as a "rock" (Ps. 18:2), a strong "tower" (Prov. 18:10), or as having "wings" (Ps. 91:4). To understand these metaphors, a consistent view of Scripture must keep sight of how these images are mutually conflicting (some being mineral and others animal or human images of God). Further, they do not fit with some clear metaphysical descriptions of God as a spirit (John 4:24), as infinite (Ps. 147:5), and as unchanging (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:18; James 1:17).

Sixth, the God of the Bible is not a finite, struggling, dualistic Greek god on the order of Plato's Demiurgos, who creates *ex materia*, out of eternally preexisting matter. Rather, the God of the Bible is the supreme "I AM" (Exod. 3:14), who alone is eternal and who brings everything else into being ex nihilo, from nothing (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 1:2; 11:3; Col.1:17; John 17:5; Rom. 4:17).

Seventh, the God of Scripture is unlimited in knowledge and controls the course of human events (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4–10; Dan. 4:25). He is infinite in power and perfections (1 Kings 8:27; Pss. 71:15; 147:5; Job 42:2). What is more, the God of Christian theism is not a temporal being; he is eternal. He is the "I AM" (Exod. 3:14) who has ever been and ever will be (Ps. 90:1–2). It is he "alone who has immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16) and who "created this world of time" (Heb. 1:2 Knox).

Eighth, the panentheistic view of God's interaction with the world is based on the mistaken notion that God cannot *interact* with the world unless he *reacts* to the world. It totally neglects the biblical picture of a God who can "[declare] the end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10) and hence can *interact* with the world without being *reactive*, because he is *proactive*. God is like a good Mother, who, foreseeing her fevered child will awake in the night, places water and aspirin at her bedside, awaiting her child's cry, in order to provide for her needs.

Ninth, the process view of change is incoherent. It has change, but nothing changing. It is like falling with nothing falling or raining with no rain drops. There is no unchanging, enduring substrata beneath the change. There is no "substance" beneath all the changing accidents. One process theologian speaks of an actual entity existing only one tenth of a second and then vanishing. That

would be ten "I's" (persons) every second and six hundred "I's" every minute and six thousand "I's" in ten minutes. There is no enduring "I." A person literally goes out of existence every split second and is re-created out of nothing by no one the next split second. Thus in ten minutes there would be six thousand "I"s! Change, then, is a series of annihilations and re-creations out of nothing (ex nihilo) with no theistic God to do it. This is literally impossible, since nothing cannot produce something out of nothing.

Tenth, panentheism's criticisms and qualifications of traditional theism are mistaken. That is to say, Ogden's alleged antinomies not only are ungrounded but also turn out in favor of theism over panentheism. For example, the so-called antinomy of creation is built on the mistaken notion that a necessary Being must necessarily create. But as Aquinas pointed out over seven hundred years ago, the only thing a necessary Being must will necessarily is the necessity of his own being. Everything else is contingent and need be willed only contingently. God must be God, but God need not create. God does not have to *do* anything; he simply has to *be* God. One need not view God as less than absolutely necessary in order to secure the contingency of the creative act. God *must* will his own good, but he *may* or may not will to create any other good.

Likewise, the alleged antimony of service is based on a confusion about the nature of God. While it is true that no act of the creature can add a single perfection to an already absolutely perfect theistic God, it is nonetheless also true that the believer's worship and service are eternally significant and for the glory of God. The theistic God does not *need* our service to add to his perfections, but he does *desire* it, which is even a higher motive. We cannot add to God's *attributes* by our service in the world, but we can contribute to his *activities* in the world. What service we render for God adds nothing to God's *nature*, but it does contribute significantly to his *plan* for this world. That is, it is personally pleasing and satisfying to God that we do his will; it does make a significant and eternal difference. God does care what we do, and it does glorify or magnify who he is and what he wills when we serve him.

In addition, Ogden's so-called antimony of relationship is likewise built on a mistaken notion. It is true that, properly speaking, the creature is related to the Creator, the relative to the Absolute, the changing to the Unchanging, and not the reverse. The pillar does not change its relation to the human when the latter moves on the other side of it; it is the human who changes his or her relationship to the pillar. Nevertheless, the relationship of the pillar and human is different in both cases, and in both cases it is a *real* relationship. An unchanging God does not need to change in order to engage in changing relationships. Such a God is interactive without being reactive. God is so by being proactive in his relationship with creatures.

Furthermore, God can interact without being interdependent, God does not need humanity's love but does desire it, and mutual desire is sufficient for the reciprocity demanded by interpersonal relations. God's love is one-way in the sense that God does not *need* our return love, but it is two-way in the sense that God *wants* it. Not only is interpersonal reciprocity possible with a Being who is unchanging love, but it is possible in a much more secure and higher sense. One can never be absolutely sure of the love of a finite being, who can or may change his or her love and who does not have the infinite power to secure it from temporality or outside forces. Only the absolutely loving and powerful God of Christian theism can provide the highest level of real, interpersonal relationships with humanity.

Finally, if God is in time, then God is also spatial. And if God is spatial, then God is also material (since according to modern physics, the material universe is a space-time continuum). But if God is material (contrary to Scripture—John 4:24), then God cannot think any faster than the speed of light,

thus having no way even to apprehend the whole universe at one time. Further, whatever is material is subject to the second law of thermodynamics and is running out of usable energy. In short, the process God is only a gigantic creature in need of a Creator!

Summary and Conclusion

The panentheistic worldview is that of a finite and (usually) dipolar God whose actual pole is identified with the changing, temporal world and whose potential pole is the eternal possibilities beyond the world. This God is finite in power and perfections but is growing in the latter by the cooperation of humanity in the achievement of value, which is thereafter stored and preserved in God. Panentheism may best be seen as a halfway house between traditional theism and pantheism. With the latter, panentheism stresses the immanence of God, and with the former it attempts to preserve some meaningful sense in which God is more than the world (i.e., is transcendent). Panentheism is the descendant of the God of Greek philosophy. Add the finite, dualistic world of Plato's Demiurgos, the changing world process of Heracleitus, and the developmental unfolding of God in the historical process (à la Hegel), and one is brought to the modern dipolar process God of Whitehead.

In attempting to avoid the extremes of some other views of God and by developing a positive metaphysics of its own, the panentheistic view has provided some important insights, such as its arguments for the existence of God, its rejection of the pantheistic identification of God and the world, and its stress on God's relatability to the world. Also, it has appropriately stressed God's immanence, provided important insights into his relational interaction with the world, and rightly rejected a static view of an inactive God for a dynamic God engaged in ceaseless creative activity.

However, as a total worldview, panentheism with its dipolar God does not fill the bill. The basic dipolar concept of God as eternal potential seeking temporal actualization is self-defeating. No potential can actualize itself, and if there is some pure actuality outside the panentheistic God that actualizes it, then one must posit a theistic God of pure act in order to account for the panentheistic God. Further, a finite, changing God must have a not-finite (i.e., infinite) and unchanging basis and ground for his change. The relative presupposes the absolute, for what is to-another relates ultimately to what is in-itself. There are, in addition, some serious problems with a panentheistic solution to evil. A finite God cannot guarantee the defeat of evil, holds out little prospect of a better world, and seems to be engaging in an extremely wasteful project at our expense for his own enrichment. Finally, the claim that such a God is biblical is unfounded, and panentheism's criticisms of theism are unjustified. By comparison a theistic God is more adequate both metaphysically and personally.

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13
Polytheism

Polytheism is the worldview that many finite gods exist in the world. There are differing versions of polytheism. In some forms, all the gods are more or less equal. Each has a personal sphere or domain. In another type of polytheism, the gods form a hierarchy with a chief god, such as Zeus. This is called henotheism. In *traditional polytheism*, such as the Greek[414] and Roman pantheons, the number of gods is limited. Mormonism holds to an indefinite number of gods wherein gods beget gods forever. This could be called *serial polytheism.* Most forms of polytheism stand alone, unconnected with any other worldview. In Hinduism, however, polytheism and pantheism go hand in hand, with one impersonal Brahman and 330 million personal manifestations of the one impersonal ultimate Reality. This can be labeled *manifestational polytheism.*

Sources of Polytheism

Polytheism springs from the soil of paganism, Hinduism, and Wicca. Modern atheism fertilized the soil out of which contemporary neo-paganism grew. David Miller describes it as rising from the ashes of the "death of God," which was heralded by Thomas Altizer and others in the 1960s and 1970s. The death of God gives rise to the rebirth of the gods, according to Miller.[415] When God died in modern culture, the ancient gods rose again. Monotheism was holding back paganism.

More remotely, according to the Bible, polytheism originally sprang out of a rejection of monotheism and a subsequent attempt to "[worship] . . . the creature rather than the Creator" (Rom. 1:21–25). Modern evolutionary views of religion, following James Frazer's widely publicized *Golden Bough*, rejected the view of original monotheism, claiming that polytheism evolved out of animism, which led to henotheism and ultimately to monotheism. However, the classic works of Wilhelm Schmidt (*The Origin and Growth of Religion*) and J. S. Mbiti (*African Religions*) have demonstrated that an original form of monotheism is found at the base of later religious development, including polytheism. Professor Winfried Corduan also defends this view (*Neighboring Faiths*).

Varieties of Polytheism

The fortunes of polytheism, at least in the West, are inversely related to the health of theism (belief in one God). Greek polytheism declined with the rise of Plato and Aristotle's philosophical theism. Roman polytheism all but died with the rise of Christianity in the West. Augustine's *City of God* narrates the Christian response to Roman polytheism. Polytheism has experienced a revival with the decline of Judeo-Christian views in the broader culture. This has been accompanied by a rise in witchcraft or Wicca, which also embraces polytheism. Margot Adler's book *Drawing Down the Moon* chronicles this movement. Now many groups are calling themselves "neo-pagans." Also,

polytheism is growing with traditional Mormonism, which holds to a serial kind of polytheism in which an endless series of gods give birth to others.

Ancient Greek and Roman Polytheism

The main root of polytheism in the West is ancient Greek and Roman religions. David Miller noted that ancient polytheism remained underground or in the countercultural tradition of the West throughout the nearly two-thousand-year reign of monotheistic thought. However, the rise of polytheism may have been behind the interest in the latter part of the twentieth century in the occult, magic, extraterrestrial life, Eastern societies and religions, communes, new forms of multiple family life, and other alternative-lifestyle meaning systems that seem so foreign.[416] Miller adds that, for racial-cultural traditions, Western Europeans still draw on gods and goddesses of ancient Greece.[417]

Hinduism

Not all modern paganism comes from Greece. The revival of Buddhism and especially Hinduism, with its over 300 million gods, is responsible as well. Unlike other forms, this kind of polytheism is combined with pantheism, for the one impersonal Brahman (which makes Hinduism a form of pantheism) has personal manifestations in the multimillions of Hindu gods.

Witchcraft (Wicca)

Another stream of polytheism is the religion of Wicca. This movement, popularly known as witchcraft, has an overlap with the radical feminist movement, many of whose participants are Wiccan. Wiccans abhor monotheism.[418] Feminist witch Margot Adler refers to monotheism as one of the totalistic religious and political views that dominate society.[419]

Mormon Polytheism

Joseph Smith began as a monotheist (in *The Book of Mormon*), but in his later writings he turned to a form of polytheism. Thus Christian terms are given new meaning by Mormons. The "Trinity" is composed of three separate and distinct entities, "a plurality of Gods."[420] They are one in "purpose," not in essence.[421] This is a form of polytheism called tritheism. God the Father has a tangible body of flesh and bones.[422] Each God was begotten by a previous God in an endless series of Gods,[423] which is a serial polytheism. God has a "wife," who is our "Heavenly Mother" and by whom we are all begotten.[424] God was once a "finite," "mortal" man, who became God the same way we can become God.[425]

Souls of humans preexisted before the world but needed a body.[426] Humanity's preexistent goal for life on earth was to attain Godhood.[427] "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."[428] Godhood is attained only after the resurrection by plural marriage and procreation in heaven.[429]

How God became God was described by Joseph Smith:

> God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . . God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did. . . . And you

> have got to learn how to be gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another . . . from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead . . . , until you arrive at the station of a god, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before.[430]

As it turns out, then, there has been an endless series of gods, and the one that Mormon's call God now is only the last in the series, who is God of this planet, our heavenly Father who begat all of us.

George Lucas's (1944–) Polytheism

George Lucas's "religion of the Jedi," featured in his Star Wars films, has roots in the Mexican sorcerer Don Juan. Lucas biographer Dale Pollock notes that "Lucas' concept of the Force was heavily influenced by Carlos Castaneda's *Tales of Power*. This is an account of a supposed Mexican Indian sorcerer, Don Juan, who uses the phrase 'life force.'"[431] The director of Lucas's movie *The Empire Strikes Back*, Irvin Kershner, is a Zen Buddhist. As we noted in chapter 11, Kershner admitted of the film: "I wanna introduce some Zen here because I don't want the kids to walk away just feeling that everything is shoot-'em-up, but that there's also a little something to think about here in terms of yourself and your surroundings."[432] Whatever the source of the Force of Star Wars, it clearly is similar to the Force believed in by neo-pagan witches. Lucas himself referred to the Force as a religion in the first-released movie of his Star Wars series.[433] The character Luke Skywalker was engaging in white magic when he tapped into the "light side of the Force"; the Force was "God." Lucas claimed in an interview with *Time* that "the world works better if you're on the good side" of this occult Force.[434] Lucas's sorcery is even more evident in the hero of his subsequent film, *Willow*, whose life goal is to be a sorcerer.

The New Polytheism

David L. Miller, in *The New Polytheism: Rebirth of the Gods and Goddesses*, argues that polytheism is alive and well in contemporary society.[435] He urges people in Western society to get in tune with the gods in order to liberate themselves to be the kind of people they really are. This is also called neo-paganism.[436]

Basic Beliefs of Polytheism

Polytheism is not a monolithic religious movement. Hence, it is difficult to analyze it in particular. The best we can do is to characterize some general beliefs common to many polytheists.

The Rejection of Monotheism

The establishment of polytheism necessitates the demolition of monotheism. God must be rejected before the gods can be accepted. Monotheism is the belief in one God above and beyond the world. Monotheistic thinking gathers all human "explanation systems, whether theological, sociological, political, historical, philosophical, or psychological," under one all-embracing system. This system operates "according to fixed concepts and categories" that are controlled by an either/or kind of logic. Something is "either true or false, either this or that, either beautiful or ugly, either good or

evil." But this kind of thinking, Miller says, "fails a people in a time when experience becomes self-consciously pluralistic, radically both/and."[437]

The Acceptance of Pluralism

This is what Western society is today: radically pluralistic. The contemporary Westerner lives in a world where truth and morality are relative. "Life often feels anarchistic: no horizons, fences, boundaries, and no center to prove one securely close to home."[438] The contemporary situation is so pluralistic that its modern interpreters "have had to rely on a strange set of words" in their attempt to explain it. Charles Baudouin speaks of "polyphonic meaning" and being. In speaking of the nature of the thinking required for contemporary understanding, Philip Wheelwright points to "plurisignificative knowing" and communicating. Norman O. Brown talks about "polymorphous reality" as a key to our history, and Ray Hart names the deepest aspect of our literature's articulations of reality with the phrase "polysemous functioning of imaginal discourse." If we try to make sense of our society, Michael Novak suggests, it will help to think of America as a pluralistic community of radically unmeltable ethnics. Concerning government and political science, Robert Dahl speaks of "polyarchy."[439]

This "poly" kind of thinking betrays the fact that "we have suffered a death of God."[440] No longer is there "a single center holding things together." God is dead, as Friedrich Nietzsche so boldly declared. Western civilization has buried the monotheistic way of thinking and speaking about God, being, and reality.[441] Released from the "tyrannical imperialism of monotheism," people can discover new dimensions and diversity. There is a new potential for imaginative hopes and desires, laws and pleasures.[442]

Significantly, Miller avoids using references to deities in defining what he means by *polytheism*. Polytheism is "a specific religious situation . . . characterized by plurality, and plurality that manifests itself in many forms." Socially speaking, it is a "situation" in which pluralism intermingles various values, social patterns, and moral principles. Sometimes these values and patterns work together, but more often they are incompatible and each worldview vies to dominate the "normal social order." Miller believes humans are naturally polytheistic in consciousness, giving polytheism "advantages" over monotheism. "Only a polytheistic consciousness will account realistically for our lives." People are freed from the idea that they must "get it all together"; polytheism allows an irrationalism in which one may avoid a fully constructed view. Polytheism puts people in touch with the richness and diversity of life. Monotheism encourages thought about what lies behind life, rather than thought about life itself.[443]

Philosophical Relativism

Polytheism is experienced when no single "truth" guides people to "a single grammar, a single logic, or a single symbol-system." Polytheism mediates the worldview warfare by introducing "relativism, indeterminacy, plural logic systems, irrational numbers; substances that do not have substances, such as quarks; double explanations for light; and black holes in the middle of actual realities."[444]

Behind this peacemaking role, however, polytheism works by seeking to absorb other religious ideas into itself. It remains the worship of multiple gods and goddesses. In the curious popular form, these deities are not worshiped all at the same time. Rather, only one god or goddess at a time can be

worshiped. In this, polytheism gives a nod to monotheism, the worship of one God. "Polytheistic religion is actually a polytheistic theology, a system of symbolizing reality in a plural way in order to account for all experience." And this "implies that our experience of social, intellectual, and psychological worlds is religious—that is, it is so profound and far-reaching that only a theological explanation can account for it fully."[445]

At one time, polytheism reigned in Western culture. But when Greek culture collapsed, polytheism died and was replaced by monotheism. Although polytheism remained "in the underground or countercultural tradition of the West" throughout the two-thousand-year reign of monotheistic thought, it did not have any significant effect. With the death of monotheism, Miller says, polytheism may be resurrected again to its proper place.[446]

The World

Miller suggests that the new polytheism gives "a new function for the old Gods and Goddesses," through three aspects. First, the new polytheism "is a modern sensibility." It is not just that "our contemporary society is pluralistic, nor that our roles are many, nor that our morality is relativistic, nor even that our political ideology is fragmented." These are manifestations of something more fundamental. "The more basic feeling is that the Gods and Goddesses are reemerging in our lives."[447]

Second, the new polytheism rethinks old religious and conceptual ways of thinking. Western thought is rooted in the early Greeks, who were largely polytheistic, so the ideas, concepts, and categories deep in the Western psyche fit the thought or logic of mythic tales.[448]

Third, the new polytheism helps confused moderns put into order the "many potencies, many structures of meaning and being, all given to us in the reality of our everyday lives."[449]

Given the death of monotheism and the rebirth of polytheism, who or what are the gods and goddesses of this polytheism? Miller maintains that the gods are powers or forces. These forces transcend the personal, the historical, and the social. They are not affected by events or desires. Yet they are immanent in the world as potencies in individuals, in societies, and in nature.[450] Miller believes these powers provide a structure of reality that informs human social, intellectual, and personal behavior.[451] These powers are "the Gods and Goddesses of ancient Greece—not Egypt, not the Ancient Near East, not Hindu India, not Ancient China or Japan. Greece is the locus of our polytheism simply because, willy-nilly, we are Occidental men and women."[452]

Miller suggests how this new function of the gods and goddesses could work. The tremendous growth in technology can be thought about and informed by the stories of Prometheus, Hephaestus, and Asclepius."Prometheus steals the fire and ends trapped on a rock, gnawed at by the power he has himself supplanted by his knowledge. Hephaestus is the divine smith, the technologist supreme, who is the bastard of his mother and at a total loss for sensuousness and feeling. . . . Asclepius is the technologist of the feelings; he is the psychotherapist whom technology and its civilization will make into the high priest of mental health culture."[453]

The story of the goddess Hera, who "tried to socialize Mount Olympus," is relived when "computers and statistical procedures come to be revered as true wisdom" and "consultants and experts must attend every decision in business and government." The work of the "ever-present God Pan ('All') is seen in the irrational that is always just below the surface of the human experience, breaking out into violence or mysticism."[454]

At one time, the view of the world was framed around the ideas of the second-century-AD Alexandrian astronomer Ptolemy. The earth was thought to be "an immovable sphere at the center of the universe, around which nine concentric spheres revolve." Thus all that existed was "organized around a single center," the earth, with the end of the universe imagined to be "fixed and secure." This view of the world collapsed with Copernicus (and subsequent scientists). Now the universe has no known center, and its horizons are neither fixed nor secure. Instead, it is seen as an "infinitely expanding universe whose center is . . . unknown."[455]

Humankind

Men and women are "the playground" of the gods. The gods parade "through our thoughts without our control and even against our will." Thus, "We do not possess the gods, but they possess us." They "live through our psychic structures" and "manifest themselves always in our behaviors." We do not grab the gods; rather, the "gods grab us, and we play out their stories."[456]

Psychologically, polytheism is experienced in the separate "selves" of personhood. Each self has an autonomy, a life of its own that comes and goes without regard to the will. No one can be gripped by more than one god at a time. In this sense, Miller and the modern polytheists are monotheistic, or henotheistic. Each person worships one god at a time, the one in control of personhood, out of a large pantheon of gods. However, the story of the one god who is in temporary domination may involve marriages with other gods, parentage by still others, offspring, and maiden goddesses. So the conception is always ultimately polytheistic. To think differently is to partake of the self-deception that has been perpetrated by monotheistic thinking.[457]

The purpose of humankind is to incarnate the gods, to become aware of their presence, to acknowledge and celebrate them.[458] This can occur only when humans begin to see their world through polytheistic, mythological glasses.[459]

Values

According to polytheism all values are relative. Truth and falsehood, life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and evil, are all mixed together.[460] Monotheistic thinking separates values into either/or concepts and categories.[461] But this way of thinking does not adequately account for the many sides of human experience. What does is the polytheistic both/and sort of thinking, which recognizes the relativity of all values. Polytheists are free to choose their own beliefs and practices.

Worship

Neo-pagan polytheists are free to worship any gods and goddesses, ancient or modern, from the East or West. Some worship Apollo and Diana. Author-philosopher Theodore Roszak was an animist.[462] He believed that "the statue and sacred grove were transparent windows . . . by which the witness was escorted through to sacred ground beyond and participated in the divine."[463] Most neo-pagans revive one of the Western forms of polytheism. The names of the gods may differ, but most often they are Celtic, Greek, or Latin.

Some polytheists debate about the reality status of their "gods," assigning an idealistic or aesthetic role to them. But as one put it, "All these things are within the realm of possibility. It has been our nature to call these 'gods.'"[464] God is an eternal being; so are we eternal beings. Then, in a sense,

we too are god. Adler notes that there are two deities of most Wiccan groups. One is the god, who is the lord of animals and of death and beyond. The other is the goddess, who has three aspects: Maiden, Mother, and Crone. Each of her aspects is symbolized by a phase of the moon. The Maiden is the waxing crescent, the Mother is the full moon, and the waning crescent is like the woman who is past childbearing. Adler suggests that neo-pagan polytheists might be considered "duotheists," though feminist witches are often monotheists, worshiping the goddess as the one god.[465] They sometimes even describe themselves as monotheistic polytheists. Morgan McFarland, a Dallas witch, declared: "I see myself as monotheistic in believing in the Goddess, Creatrix, the Female Principle, but at the same time acknowledging that other gods and goddesses do exist through her as manifestations of her, facets of the whole."[466] By her own definition, the use of *monotheistic* here is misleading. She and other neo-pagans look to a many-faceted (polytheistic) manifestation of pantheism. Each manifestation, of course, is finite.[467]

Pluralism and Relativism

Neo-pagans are strongly pluralistic. Polytheism by its nature leaves room for more gods or goddesses. All forms of worship of whatever god one may choose are legitimate. Such belief rejects absolute truth in favor of an irrationalism in which opposites can both be true. Miller denies that any system operates "according to fixed concepts and categories" and that all are controlled by either/or categories of logic. He rejects the idea that something is true or false, beautiful or ugly, good or evil.[468]

Consistently, many neo-pagans flatly reject the idea of *The Witches' Bible*, fuming at the word *the*. Modern pagans remain antiauthoritarian, taking pride in being "the most flexible and adaptable of religions, . . . perfectly willing to throw out dogmas."[469] A neo-pagan "creed," therefore, is an oxymoron. They are noncreedal by definition.

A Radical Feminist Connection

Many neo-pagan polytheists closely associate with radical feminism. Of course, not all neo-pagans are feminists, nor are all feminists neo-pagan. Nonetheless, neo-paganism has drawn many feminists to its fold. Adler describes the dynamics this way: "Many feminist Witchcraft covens have . . . attracted women from all walks of life. But even there, most of these women have already been strengthened by the feminist movement, or by consciousness-raising groups, or by an important experience such as divorce, separation, or a homosexual encounter." One neo-pagan feminist said: "We have found that women working together are capable of conjuring their past and reawakening their old ascendancy. . . . This does not seem to happen when men are present . . . it seems that in mixed covens, no matter how 'feminist' the women are, a kind of competition begins to happen. Among the women alone, none of this occurs, and a great reciprocity develops, unlike anything I have seen before."[470]

Some were witches before they were feminists. A neo-pagan from Los Angeles said her spiritual journey began when she observed her mother talking to the dead. "I saw her go into a trance and feel presences around her. She is an artist, and her art often reflects Sumerian influences. . . . She tells fortunes and can still the wind." But the daughter, like the mother, found herself in the traditional role of wife and mother and felt limited and enslaved. While attempting suicide she had a vision that

confirmed her occult beliefs. Her awareness as a witch and her feminist perspective met in the attempt to liberate her womanhood from perceived oppression.[471]

One attraction of witchcraft for women is that when they are among other witches, their gender has equal, and often superior, status. As far back as the 1890s, a social observer named Leland wrote that in times of intellectual rebellion against conservatism and hierarchy, there is a feminist struggle for superiority. He noted that in witchcraft the female is the primitive principle. "The perception of this [tyranny] drove vast numbers of the discontent into rebellion, and as they could not prevail by open warfare, they took their hatred out in a form of secret anarchy, which was, however, intimately blended with superstition and fragments of old tradition."[472]

Occultism

Many polytheists are involved in the occult. They believe in an impersonal force, energy, or power, into which they can tap to do supernormal things. The Luke Skywalker of the first-released film in the Star Wars series (*Episode 4–A New Hope*) is the classic model for this belief, as was George Lucas's subsequent film, *Willow*. The popular film *Avatar* is a form of neo-pagan animism. Of course, the most influential example in contemporary literature is the wildly successful book and film series whose protagonist is Harry Potter.

An Evaluation of Polytheism

Not all aspects of polytheism can be evaluated here. Our focus will be on some central points of their worldview. First, we will briefly discuss some positive values.

Some Positive Values of Polytheism

Recognition of Our Religious Instinct. Polytheism is a reminder of the existence of the presence of other beings in the universe that seek worship. It reflects a widespread and growing recognition that humanity is not alone in the universe. Reported contacts with UFOs or extraterrestrials persist. Even many scientists believe that there are intelligent beings in space. Even many nonpolytheistic religions recognize the existence of superhuman beings, such as angels and demons. If there is a divine reality, it follows that we should seek to discover our relationship to that reality and how we should respond to it. Carl Sagan's SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) program searched for a message from outer space. He even made a movie (*Contact*) that speaks of getting such a message.

Recognition of the Need to Tune In to Divine Reality. Polytheists' emphasis on getting "tuned in" to the divine reality and adjusting one's behavior accordingly is commendable. This truly is basic to the nature of humans, and polytheists should be commended for recognizing it.

Seeing an Analogy between the Divine and Human. Although it is overanthropomorphized, polytheists should be commended for positing an analogy between humanity and the divine. If divine reality exists, and is in some way connected with humans, then it would seem that our nature would in some way reflect deity. The very desire to communicate with divine reality is based on the recognition of some similarity (analogy) between the two. Without this, it is impossible to commune with ultimate reality.

Sensing Divine Presence in Nature. Polytheism often goes hand in hand with animism, which senses a divine presence in nature. This is a twisted form of what Christians call the immanence of God. It stands in bold contrast to the cold, mechanistic view of nature in contemporary materialism.

Some Negative Criticisms of Polytheism

Despite the remnants of religious and metaphysical reality that remain in polytheism, as a worldview it has serious problems. Some will be briefly enumerated here. Not all of these apply to all forms of polytheism, but they are all applicable to some form of polytheism.

Irrationality. Many modern polytheists claim that we should discard reason as normative in life. But if this is done, then opposites could both be true. This violates the fundamental laws of thought. The person who claims that opposites can both be true does not really believe that the opposite of that statement also is true. Thus it is a self-defeating belief.

Relativism. Many are also relativists. But all truth cannot be relative. That very claim is presented as a nonrelative truth claim. There cannot be one and only one God (monotheism) and more than one god (polytheism) at the same time and in the same sense.

Metaphysical Pluralism. For polytheists, ultimate reality in the religious realm is many, not one. This raises the objection of disharmony. How can we have a universe when there are many diverse gods in conflict? Miller admits the problem, saying they often act in "contention." He tries to make the most of this, insisting that life may even be characterized as "a war of the Powers." He wrote, "Man—his self, his society, and his natural environment—is the arena of an eternal Trojan War. Our moods, emotions, unusual behaviors, dreams, and fantasies tell us those rough moments when the war is no longer a cold war or a border skirmish, but an all-out guerrilla conflict. These indicators also tell us, by feeling and intuition, when one God has absented himself and another has not yet rushed into the vacuum. We know the war well." If modern people acknowledge these gods, new life will be infused into old ways of seeing and thinking. There will be a fresh philosophical structure through which to speak and think about our "deepest experience."[473]

However, the problem is that unless there is some ultimate unity in the universe under which all these gods operate, there can be no harmony and no resolution of the conflict. Unless these many finite gods operate under the law and domain of a Higher Power, harmony is not possible.

If polytheism claims that God and nature are distinct, that the one made the other, that one rules and the other obeys, then gods are not worshiped, but rather the Creator God. C. S. Lewis observed, "The difference between believing in God and in many gods is not one of arithmetic. . . . God has no plural."[474] Herein is revealed the depravity of polytheism, for it prefers to worship a god humans have made, rather than the God who made them. One polytheist concluded, "I realized it wasn't so outrageous, and that we could choose what deities to follow . . . [for] the element of Christianity that bothered [me] . . . was its requirement to be submissive to the deity." He adds that his gods have human characteristics. They are flawed and so more approachable.[475]

As Plotinus argued, all plurality presupposes a prior unity.[476] Many are just a multiple imitation of the One. Thus many gods are not self-explanatory. What is the basis of their unity? This is not a poly-verse but a uni-verse. If ultimately there is a personal Power behind the universe, it must be a unity, not a plurality.

The anthropic principle[477] reveals that the entire universe was one—with one purpose and Purposer—from the very beginning. From the moment of the big bang, the entire universe was fine-

tuned for the emergence of human life. This bespeaks one intelligent Creator. The idea of an eternal universe posited by polytheism has other serious philosophical and scientific objections.

Religious Pluralism. The pluralistic desire to embrace many differing forms of religion runs into a similar problem. Everything cannot be true, including opposites. This violates the law of noncontradiction. Either polytheism is true and monotheism is false, or the reverse. They cannot both be true. But once this either/or distinction is accepted, pluralism of opposing truth claims is impossible. Neopolytheists cannot use either/or statements to affirm both/and thinking. Polytheists have to deny pluralism in order to affirm polytheism; if opposites are not true, then pluralism is false.

To put it another way, the claim that we must be inclusive, holding all religions to be true, is also self-defeating. It is a noninclusive (exclusivist) claim to assert that only pluralism is true and all exclusivism is false.

While neo-pagans claim to allow total diversity of expression, the neo-pagan practice is quite restrictive. The very existence of *secret* covens reveals the exclusivistic nature of the group. Some refer to Wicca as *the* religion. Even proponents believe in a universal element in neo-paganism, insisting on universality of content but not of form.[478] The existence of an initiation rite is an earmark of exclusivism. Witches claim their rite is a way to protect the institution from those who are insincere or evil, or who would give the craft a bad name.[479] But if they must protect their institution from the evil or the insincere, then there must be a genuine form to preserve. Adler claims that witchcraft was once the *universal religion*, which has been driven underground.[480] To claim to be *the* religion is to claim universality and imply exclusivism.

One controversy, in which Wiccans condemned a couple who were charging money for lessons in witchcraft, further shows exclusivity. Those who voiced disapproval insisted that "this violates Craft Law," indicating that there is a universal craft law that defines right and wrong. If it does not, witchcraft can be done in any way one wishes. Even the "Principles of Wiccan Belief" adopted by the Council of American Witches on April 11–14, 1974, has a strong statement excluding the belief that Christianity is "the only way." They frankly acknowledged this as part of "our animosity toward Christianity."[481]

All-inclusive groups fail to realize that every truth claim is exclusive. If Christianity is true, then of necessity all non-Christian beliefs are false. If witchcraft is true, all nonwitchcraft beliefs are false. Neo-paganism is just as exclusivistic as any other religion that claims to have discovered truth about reality.

Failure to Explain Origins. Some pagan religions speak of origins, but few ask ultimate questions about them. There are gods acting, but how did they get us to this point? What caused it all to be? C. S. Lewis remarked that to bring God and nature into relation also separates them. What makes and what is made are two, not one. "Thus the doctrine of Creation in one sense empties nature of divinity."[482] That destroys paganism. Thus polytheism provides no answer to one of life's ultimate questions: Where did we come from? To answer that we were always here simply is unsatisfactory because it violates the fundamental law of causality, which demands that every finite has a cause. And since these gods are finite, it follows that they too need a cause. Mormons claim an endless series of gods retreating into eternity. But this has been shown to be incoherent since an infinite number of gods (things, or moments) in the past is impossible as an infinite series never ends (see below), but every moment (or thing) ends in the present.[483]

And to claim that the gods simply emerged from nature does not explain the situation either. For how can the impersonal cause the personal? How can the effect be greater than the cause? The cause

can give only what it has to give. Hence, if the cause (nature) is not personal, then it cannot cause the personal gods.

Further, polytheistic gods are within that universe, not beyond it. But the evidence that the universe came into existence is very strong.[484] If the universe is not eternal but came to exist from nothing, then the gods posited by polytheism are not eternal; they must have come into existence. If they came into existence, then they are not gods but creatures made by some eternal Cause (God). And if the gods of polytheism derive their existence from another, then this other is really the supreme God of monotheism. Thus polytheism collapses into monotheism. Therefore, if the gods exist, they ultimately depend on a Cause beyond them and beyond the universe. But this conclusion coincides with the claims of theism, not those of polytheism.

Further, if the natural elements—say, heaven and earth—had given birth to the gods, then the gods would not be ultimate beings. Whatever is derived from something else depends on that something, at least for its origin. How could a being that received its existence from another be above its maker? This would be like a cookie claiming to be greater than its cook, or a marionette above its master. Similarly, if nature created the gods, then nature is ultimate. And if, as Paul Tillich thought, worship involves an ultimate commitment to an ultimate, then nature, not the gods, should be worshiped. This would be true regarding whatever was believed to have given birth to the gods or to have preceded them. If the gods are derivative beings, then they are not worthy of ultimate commitment. Why worship something that has no ultimate worth?

One philosophical argument stems from the impossibility of an actual infinite series of events in time. An eternal universe would be a beginningless series of events in time. But how could such a series possibly exist? To illustrate, suppose there were a library with an infinite number of books on its shelves. Imagine that each book is numbered. Since there is an infinite number of books, every book is numbered and every possible number must be printed on the books in the library. From this it would follow that no new book could be added to the library, for there would be no number left to assign. All the numbers have been used up. But this seems absurd, for all objects in reality can be numbered. Further, it would be easy to add to the library, since one could make a new book by tearing a page out of each of the first fifty books, adding a title page, binding them together and putting the finished product on the shelf. Hence, the idea of an actual infinite series of books appears to be impossible. Therefore, the polytheistic belief in an eternal universe would appear to be impossible.[485]

Anticreedalism. Its protest notwithstanding, neopolytheism has its own creeds and dogmas. Adler admits: "I've seen a lot of people in the Craft get hung up on fragments of ritual and myth. Some people accept these fragments as a dogma." While protesting creeds, Adler lays down a set of "basic beliefs" she claims "most people in this book share."[486] She seems unaware that she is thereby defining a creed.

The creed she confesses is informative: "The world is holy. Nature is holy. The body is holy. Sexuality is holy. The mind is holy. The imagination is holy. You are holy. . . . Thou art Goddess. Thou art God. Divinity is immanent in all Nature. It is as much within you as without."[487] There are several standard doctrines of neo-pagan polytheism in this creed, including pantheism, polytheism, animism, self-deification, and, covertly, free sexual expression. In the creed they called "Principles of Wiccan Belief," the Council of American Witches listed thirteen basic principles. These beliefs include moon worship, harmony with nature, the creative power in the universe manifest in male and female polarities, and sex as pleasure. Interestingly, they disavowed devil worship and the belief that Christianity is "the only way."[488]

Mission. Neo-pagans claim to seek no converts. "You don't *become* a Pagan," they insist; "you *are* a Pagan." They claim that no one converts to Wicca. Yet they admit that people are drawn into paganism by "word of mouth, a discussion between friends, a lecture, a book, or an article." Regardless of their purpose, what are these but means of evangelism? To claim that these people were always pagan and that they just "came home,"[489] is like Christian missionaries denying that they evangelize, since those who believe have simply "come back to God." Like anyone else who believes he or she has found truth or reality, the neo-pagans cannot resist the urge to propagate their faith. Why else does the experience of enlightenment lead new Wiccans to proclaim with the zeal of a new convert: "I was turned on to the Goddess. It was the religion."[490]

The polytheistic analogy between humankind and the gods has been criticized as too anthropomorphic (interpreting what is not human on the basis of human characteristics). Certainly the creature should bear some resemblance to the Creator. But to apply human imperfections to deity renders the divine reality less than worthy of respect and worship. Gods of polytheism appear to be made in human image, rather than we being made in their image. This tends to give credibility to the view that polytheism is a human invention or superstition rather than a depiction of what actually is.

Summary and Conclusion

As a worldview, polytheism lacks rational and evidential support. The many spiritual beings that exist according to it are limited and imperfect. Hence, they imply an unlimited and perfect Creator. Polytheism does not account for either ultimate causality or ultimate unity, which is needed to explain a diverse, changing universe. Modern polytheism arose in the wake of the "death of God" movement.[491] Mark Satin has contrasted new paganism with primitive forms of the religion. Citing Andrea Dworkin, he noted that the "old religion" celebrated sexuality, fertility, and nature and women's place in it. It also worshiped a hairy, merry deity who loved music and dancing and good food. Further, it was nature- and woman-centered, with priestesses, wise women, midwives, goddesses, and sorceresses. It had no dogma. Each priestess interpreted the religion in her own fashion. Not all of this could be reestablished in New Age society, Satin writes, but neo-pagans could adapt nature- and woman-centeredness to fit new priorities. "Nature-centeredness has an obvious parallel in our growing recognition that the quality of our connection to the environment—both natural and people-made—has a lot to do with our spiritual health and spiritual growth."[492]

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14
Atheism

Atheists claim that there is no God. They contend that there is no God in the world (as pantheism holds) and that there is no God beyond the world (as deism claims). Furthermore, there is no God who is actually both in the world and beyond the world as theism claims, nor is there any panentheistic God who is related to the world the way a mind is to a body. There is no God of any kind, anywhere.

Of course, atheism is not merely a negative position. Many atheists do not view themselves as antitheists but simply nontheists. As nontheists, atheists offer a positive view of their own that they may call materialism, naturalism, humanism, positivisim, or even postmodernism. Since we are primarily concerned here with the question of whether there is a God and, if so, what kind of God he is, we will consider the arguments and reasons given by selected major atheists as to why they believe there is no God. Special concern will be given as to why they believe there is no theistic God. In this context it will be necessary to discuss the negative emphasis of atheism as a worldview denying the existence of God.

Traditional atheists include Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertrand Russell, and Albert Camus. The so-called new atheists (who are more vociferous and antireligion) include people such as Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*), Victor Stenger (*God: The Failed Hypothesis*), Michael Onfray (*Atheist Manifesto*), Christopher Hitchens (*God Is Not Great*), J. L. Schellenberg (*The Wisdom of Doubt*), and Michael Shermer, founder of the Skeptic Society and editor of *Skeptic* magazine.

In the strong sense, there is a difference between an atheist, an agnostic, and a skeptic. Strong atheism claims to *know* there is no God; the agnostic does *not know* if there is a God; and the skeptic *doubts* whether there is a God. But since all do not *believe* there is a God, all these views have the same worldview. Karl Marx said of agnosticism, "What, indeed, is agnosticism, but . . . 'shamefaced' materialism. The agnostic's conception of nature is materialistic throughout."[493]

A Summary of Varieties of Atheism

Atheism comes in many varieties. The term *atheism* covers a widely divergent group of thinkers. There are *traditional* atheists, who believe that there never was, is, or will be a God (e.g., Ludwig Feuerbach).[494] Then there is the *mythological* atheist, such as Nietzsche,[495] who believed that the God-myth was once alive; that is, it was a model humans believed and lived by, but this myth died and is no longer workable. Thomas Altizer once popularized another form of atheism that may be called *dialectical* atheism.[496] This view affirms the paradox that God was once really alive but died in the incarnation and crucifixion of Christ and that it has taken until modern times to realize that this is so. Finally, there is what may be called *semantical* or linguistical atheism (as in Paul van Buren),[497] which claims that God-talk is dead—that is, that there is no cognitive meaning to religious language.

Since we are concerned here with metaphysical atheism, we will discuss primarily the forms that provide some arguments denying that there is really a God in and/or beyond the world now. Although it is a serious thing to a believer in God to deny that one can *talk* meaningfully about God, semantical atheism as such does not involve any denial that there may be a God there who can somehow be felt or experienced. This view at least leaves the door open to the possibility that God exists and can in some way be experienced. Hence, this view is not really metaphysical atheism.

Not all atheists claim to have knock-down-and-drag-out arguments against God. Like theists, they claim varying degrees of certitude ranging from absolute certainty to low degrees of probability. Many of the arguments, then, are not offered as disproofs of God but merely as evidence against the existence of a God. Other arguments are considered by their proponents as definite disproofs of God. We will consider both types, attempting to put the arguments for atheism in the strongest form possible.

Another important distinction to keep in mind is that atheism makes two argumentative moves. First, it offers objections to the supposed grounds on which others believe in God. Since these arguments do not attempt to disprove God but simply to refute the grounds on which some believe in God, they will be considered in the next chapter as objections to theism. Here we will consider only attempts to prove there is no God. The following summary will indicate the major kinds of arguments for atheism and the direction in which they go. As the theistic response will indicate, none of these arguments succeed in disproving theism, and some of them even backfire into an argument in favor of theism.

Some Alleged Cosmological Disproofs of God

It is possible to argue from the principle of causality to atheism. This has been done in at least two related ways.

Causality Leads to an Infinite Regress

Some atheists argue, as Bertrand Russell did,[498] that if everything needs a cause, then so does God, in which case he would not be God. And if God does not need a cause, then neither does the world. But if the world needs no cause then there is no God. Hence, whether everything needs a cause or does not need a cause, there is no God. But if we push the principle of causality all the way and insist that *everything* needs a cause, then we launch on an infinite regress and never reach a first cause (i.e., God).

Theistic Response to Infinite Regress

This is built on a misconception of the principle of causality. Or better, it is a confusion of the principle of existential causality and the principle of sufficient reason. The latter affirms that *everything* needs a cause. This, atheists argue, leads to a contradiction of God being his own cause. But this is not what theists argue. Aquinas, for example, held that *only* finite, changing, dependent beings need a cause. This does not lead to a contradictory, self-caused being but to a noncontradictory, uncaused Being. If only finite beings need a cause, then when one arrives at a

nonfinite (i.e., infinite) being, it does not need a cause. Hence, from Aquinas's principle of causality the series would legitimately stop at a *first*, Uncaused Cause of all finite beings.[499]

If the atheist claims that it makes no sense to speak of an uncaused Cause, we simply note that many atheists believe in an uncaused Cause: the universe. The belief that the universe has always been there—eternally in one form or another—is an uncaused universe, a conclusion they desire to avoid. Some appeal to the first law of thermodynamics, saying: "Energy can neither be created nor destroyed."[500] In response, first of all, if this were true, then they would be appealing to uncaused and eternal energy while they criticize theists for believing there is uncaused and eternal energy—God! Their only other alternative is to claim that the universe is self-caused, which is impossible, as we shall see next.

Causality Leads to an Impossible Self-Caused Being

Another form of cosmological disproof was presented by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80).[501] It may be stated this way: if in accordance with the principle of causality we affirm that everything must have a cause either in itself or outside itself, then we must assume that if we arrive at a cause that no longer has need of any cause beyond itself (i.e., God), then this cause must have the cause for its being within itself. That is, God must be *ens causa sui*, a self-caused being. But a self-caused being is impossible; to cause oneself to exist, one would have to exist prior to one's existing—which is impossible. We may state the argument in another way. Only what does not exist needs its existence to be caused. But to cause existence one must exist; nothing cannot cause something. Hence, to cause one's own existence one would have to simultaneously exist and not exist, which is impossible. Hence, the existence of God (the self-caused being) is impossible.

Theistic Response to Self-Caused Being

The principle of sufficient reason does not help since it makes the qualification, "Everything needs cause *either in another or else in itself*." On this account the world has its cause in another (i.e., God), but God has his cause within himself. But atheists are correct in noting that this leads to a contradictory concept of God. If God has the cause of himself within himself, then God is a self-caused being. But it is impossible to cause one's own existence. Causes are ontologically prior to effects, and so God would have to be prior to himself. That which needs to be caused is in a state of potential being, while that which causes is in a state of actuality. Hence, a self-caused being would be simultaneously in a state of potentiality and actuality with regard to being, which is impossible.

Alleged Ontological Disproof of God

One of the more ingenious attempts to disprove God comes from J. N. Findlay (1903–87) via a reversal of the ontological argument.[502] However, the argument backfires.

Findlay argued, in accordance with theists, that the only really adequate way to conceive of God is as an absolutely necessary and perfect Being. Anything less than this would not be God, at least not a God worthy of worship. However, Findlay contends, statements about existence cannot be necessary. He follows Kant in holding that necessity is merely a logical characteristic of propositions, not a characteristic of reality. It would follow from this that the existence of the theistic God is impossible, for if the only way that a theistic God can exist (i.e., as a necessary being) is the very way in which he

cannot exist (since no statement about existence can be necessary), then it follows that God's existence is impossible. In short, if there is a God, then he must necessarily exist, for to exist contingently would mean that he is not really God. But nothing can exist necessarily, since necessity does not apply to existence; necessity is simply a characteristic of propositions, never of reality. Hence, the only way God could exist—if there were one—is the very way he cannot exist. The existence of a necessary Being (God) is therefore impossible.

Theistic Response to Ontological Disproof

One of the premises in the alleged ontological disproof of God is that "no statements about existence are necessary." If this is true, then it applies also to that very statement itself. So either that very statement—that is, "no statements about existence are necessary"—is necessarily true, or else it is not. On the one hand, if it is necessarily true, then it is self-defeating, for in that case it is a necessary statement about existence claiming that no necessary statements about existence can be made. As such it would be self-canceling. On the other hand, if the statement is not a *necessary* statement about existence, then it is *possible* that some necessary statements about existence can be made. And this is precisely what some theists claim—namely, that "God exists" is a necessary statement about what exists. At least the atheists must examine the claim of the theist who offers such a proof. The atheist cannot rule out a priori the possibility of making a necessary statement about existence without making a necessary statement about existence, which would be self-defeating. The alleged ontological disproof backfires by eliminating its own ground for asserting what it purports to be the case—namely, a proof about existence that no proofs about existence can be made. If necessary negative statements can be made about existence—statements such as "God cannot exist"—then why cannot necessary positive statements about existence be made, statements such as "God does exist"?

Alleged Moral Disproof of God's Existence

Many attempted disproofs of God come from the moral sphere. They have been stated in numerous ways by many different thinkers. We will survey some of the major attempts, centering mostly on those that purport to be disproofs of (and not simply evidence against) the existence of God. Since it is a theistic concept of God with which we are ultimately concerned, we will include some arguments that would not constitute a definitive case against a finite God but that would be telling against an infinitely good and powerful God.

Pierre Bayle's (1647–1706) Famous Dilemma for Theism. In the late seventeenth century Pierre Bayle stated the classic argument from evil against a theistic God.[503] It begins with the seemingly indisputable fact that evil exists in the world. If there were an all-powerful God, he *could* destroy this evil, and if there were an all-good God, he surely *would* destroy this evil. But this evil continues; it is not destroyed. Therefore, Bayle argues, it follows that either (a) God is impotent and cannot destroy evil; (b) God is malevolent and will not destroy evil; (c) God is both malevolent and impotent; or (d) there is no such theistic God at all. In brief, a finite God is the only kind of God possible for this dilemma. The infinitely perfect and powerful God of traditional theism is logically ruled out.

Theistic Response to Bayle's Dilemma. The theists object to Bayle's dilemma by challenging the premise that "evil is not defeated." That premise omits the important word "yet." The fact that evil is not yet defeated—has not been defeated up to this time—does not mean that it never will be defeated. Bayle offers no real proof for the implied premise that if an all-loving and all-powerful God has not

defeated evil *by now*, he never will defeat it. And if atheists add to their argument that "evil never will be defeated," then the theist can ask: How is it possible for the atheist to know this? The atheist would have to be omniscient in order to know for sure that evil will never ever be defeated in the future. So the atheist would have to be God in order to effectively use this argument against God.

What is more, the theist may use the atheist's basic premise to argue that evil one day will be defeated, for if God is all-powerful, God can defeat evil. And if God is all-good, God desires to defeat evil. So, because it is not yet defeated, the theist can be sure that God will one day defeat evil. Why? Because God *wants* to and *can* defeat evil. So it follows that God one day *will* defeat it. God's very nature as all-powerful and all-good guarantees it.

Bertrand Russell's (1872–1970) Moral Disproof of God. Russell offers an argument against theism that may be formulated into a kind of disproof of God by way of the moral law.[504] Simply put, the argument goes like this: If there is a moral law as theists claim, then either it results from God's fiat (decree), or else it does not. But if it results from God's fiat, then it is arbitrary, and in this case God is not essentially good. "Good" would simply be what God arbitrarily pronounces good, so that it could not be otherwise. (Indeed, God could pronounce anything good, including hate, rape, and cruelty.) However, if good does not result from God's fiat, then God is himself subject to some essential Good that is beyond himself and to which he finds himself subject. But if God is subordinate to some essential Good beyond himself, then he is not ultimate. This eternal, unchangeable, and superior Good is the most ultimate value in the universe. So either God is not essentially good because he is arbitrary, or else he is not ultimate because he is subject to an ultimate beyond himself. However, in either case it would eliminate the theistic God of essential, eternal, and unchangeable value and worth. There could, of course, be an arbitrary theistic God, but who could worship such a being? There seems to be no theistic God worthy of ultimate respect and worship. Or, there could be a finite god like Plato's Demiurgos who is subject to some ultimate and unchanging Good beyond himself. But here again this is not the God of traditional theism. Intrinsic moral values, such as theists themselves claim, are an argument against the existence of a theistic God.

Theistic Response to Russell's Moral Argument. Russell's dilemma is a false one because there is a third alternative, for the theist may claim that the moral law is neither outside and superior to God nor arbitrary and unworthy of God. Rather than flowing from God's arbitrary will, the moral law may be seen as rooted in God's unchangeably good and loving nature. If morality is based ultimately on God's nature and not on arbitrary will, then the apparent dilemma is resolved. In this case there is no ultimate *beyond* God to which he is subject; he is subject only to the ultimacy of the good *within* his own nature. God cannot be less than absolutely good; his nature demands that he be absolutely good. And in this event, it cannot be said that God is arbitrary, for he cannot will contrary to his nature. God cannot decide to be unloving, nor can he desire that cruelty and injustice be performed. God's will must perform in accordance with his unchangeably good nature.[505]

Albert Camus (1913–60): Theism Is Contrary to Humanitarianism. This argument provides an interesting existential slant to the traditional moral argument against a theistic God.[506] In brief, Camus contends in his novel *The Plague* that one must either join the doctor and fight the plague of rats sent by God on the sinful city, or join the priest and refuse to fight the plague so as not to fight against God, who sent it. On the one hand, to refuse to fight the plague is antihumanitarian, for it is to refuse to alleviate human suffering. On the other hand, to fight the plague is to fight against God, who sent it in judgment for people's sins. Therefore, it follows that if humanitarianism is right, then theism is wrong. If there is any kind of God, then he must be resisted because he is not even humanitarian. Minimally, it can be concluded that an all-good theistic God does not exist.

Theistic Response to Camus's Antihumanitarian Argument. Camus's argument is based on a false dichotomy: it assumes a disjunction between fighting the plague and being a believer in God. The theist may very well hold that fighting the plague is working *for* God, who is against all evil and suffering. Indeed, the theist may claim that the only truly effective way to counteract the plague is by belief in God.

Furthermore, Camus's reasoning assumes that since God sent the plague, only a humanitarian has a right to fight the plague. But the theist may argue that humans have brought the plague on themselves by their rebellion against God and that the only really effective way to correct this is by surrender to God, who alone can effectively and ultimately help them in the struggle against evil. If this were true, then fighting the plague would mean fighting against humanity's stubborn self-will, and this fight could very well entail the manifestation of mercy to those in need. Just because someone has made his or her own bed of thorns does not mean that believers should not help heal the wounds that the person gets from lying on it. The theist may claim that people have brought the plague on themselves by rebelling against God, but need not refuse to help them back to God and wholeness again. On the contrary, one could argue just the opposite, for if God lovingly warns humans of the self-initiated consequences of their sin by allowing it to terminate in a disastrous dead-end street, then he would certainly encourage merciful handling that may aid a turnabout resulting in healing and Godward movement. In this way the theist could argue that only theism is truly humanitarian since only theism offers hope of saving humans from their self-inflicted plague.

The Argument from Innocent Suffering. Contrary to some theists who contend that this is the best of all possible worlds, it seems to be an undeniable fact of life that this world can be improved. For example, not every evil is deserved; cruelty, cancer, and genocide sometimes strike innocent victims. But an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-good God would not allow any innocent suffering. Even *one* injustice in the world—and surely there are many—argues against God being *all*-just.

Theists sometimes object to this argument on the grounds that it is logically possible that there are unknown reasons for all apparently innocent suffering. Atheists, however, have countered with the objection that unless a theist can supply a plausible reason for the innocent suffering, the theistic position is *practically*, if not logically, impossible.[507] That is, unless theists can supply some plausible explanation for innocent suffering, it is practically impossible that there is a God. For all practical purposes, why should someone believe in a God for whose existence one has no plausible reason? Would anyone believe that the Nazi Adolf Eichmann was a morally good man on the grounds that there is a *possible* good explanation as to why he killed millions of Jews? The preponderance of the evidence is against there being an all-good God, and the sheer possibility that there might be such a God is insufficient grounds to believe in him in view of the amount of innocent suffering in the world.

Theistic Response to the Innocent-Suffering Argument. It is mistaken for atheists to argue that there is *innocent* suffering and that, therefore, there cannot be a God. First of all, it is possible that *all* suffering is deserved as a result of Adam's sin and that it is God's mercy that saves humans from more suffering, which they do deserve. Many Christian theists believe this is what the Bible is saying in Genesis 3 and Romans 5, 8.

Second, simply because we do not see a good purpose for some suffering does not mean that there is no purpose for it. Our lack of knowledge does not prove God's lack of goodness. Since we are finite, we can expect that there are many things we do not know. And if God is omniscient, then we can be assured that there is nothing God does not know—including a good purpose for all suffering.

Third, we do know a good purpose for much suffering, and given the nature of an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God, we can be assured that God knows a good purpose for permitting the rest of the suffering, for which we—in our finitude—do not know the purpose.

Fourth, not every particular occurrence of suffering needs a purpose. There may be random or gratuitous evil in the world. But God may have a good purpose for permitting it as a by-product of his good purposes or as collateral damage in his necessary and good war on evil.

The Argument from Unjustifiable Suffering. Theists sometimes claim that some evil is a necessary condition or means of a greater good. For example, suffering is sometimes used to produce patience. But some atheists think this argument backfires into a disproof of God.[508] If suffering is justifiable, then it is wrong to work to eliminate it. But on humanitarian grounds we know that it is not wrong to work to eliminate suffering; it is right. Therefore, it follows that suffering is not justifiable. But if suffering is not justifiable then a theistic God does not exist, since the existence of a theistic God is incompatible with unjustifiable suffering. It must be concluded, then, that a theistic God does not exist. In other words, working against suffering is right, but if there were a theistic God using suffering as a means to a greater good, then working against suffering would be wrong, for it would be tantamount to working against God. Hence, there cannot be a theistic God who is using suffering as a means to a greater good. There is suffering that cannot be justified, and, hence, there cannot be a theistic God whose existence is compatible with this unjustified suffering.

Theistic Response to the Unjustifiable-Evil Argument. First, what needs to be proved by the atheist is not that there is *innocent* suffering but that there is some *unredeemable* or *unjustifiable* suffering. The theist may argue that some "innocent" suffering is good and that this world is not the final chapter in the story of human suffering.

Second, the theist may argue that this is not the best of all possible *worlds*, but that it is the best of all possible *ways* to obtain the best possible world, which world is yet to come. The theist may contend that suffering in general is a necessary precondition for achieving the greatest good, even if not every particular suffering yields a great good.

Third, some evil is a by-product of a good process that has a good end. So-called gratuitous evil (which as such appears to be unjustified) may fit into this category. An amputation to save a life and unavoidable collateral damage in a just war are examples. Likewise, the blacksmith has a good purpose in making a plow, but a spark from the blacksmith's anvil may hit the sawdust and burn the building down.[509]

Fourth, in view of how many worthwhile things in life are often achieved only through pain, there is some experiential plausibility to the theist's claim. In this way immediate evil may lead to an ultimate and greater good. For example, tribulation works patience. Danger makes courage possible, and there can be no forgiveness unless sin is permitted. So first-order evils are needed to achieve the higher goods.

Finally, the atheist cannot press the claim that evil is *ultimately* unjustifiable—which is what one must do to eliminate the existence of God via evil—for two reasons. First, the atheist is not omniscient and cannot say with certitude whether an evil will be ultimately justified. Second, if some evil is ultimately unjust in this world, then there must be some ultimate standard of justice beyond this world. All injustice presupposes a standard of justice by which it is judged to be not-just. And an ultimate injustice demands an ultimate standard of justice. But this brings us right back to God, the ultimate standard of justice beyond the world. In short, the only way to disprove God via the problem of evil is to posit God as an ultimate moral standard of justice beyond the world. In this event, if atheism were true, it would be false; its argument turns out to be self-defeating.

It would not suffice for an atheist to contend that this moral ground is neither personal (as God) nor able to bring about ultimate justice, for the theist might plausibly argue that the standard for personal (i.e., moral) activity must be personal and that the ground for limited personal activity must be unlimited personal act. If so, it would follow that such an all-powerful person could achieve whatever greater good his personal moral nature demanded by way of ultimate good.

Some Alleged Disproofs of God from the Nature of God and Creation

There are other sources of attempts to disprove the existence of God; some of them come from the nature of God or his relation to his creation or possible creations. Four of these are worthy of note.

The Antinomy-of-Omnipotence Argument. Some atheists contend that an omnipotent God is a contradiction in terms.[510] If there were an all-powerful God, then he could do absolutely anything, including making a stone so heavy that he could not lift it or creating a monster that could get out of control. But if God could make something that he could not control, then he would not be all-powerful, since there would be something that he could not overpower. Therefore, there cannot be an omnipotent God as theists claim there is.

Theistic Response to the Antinomy-of-Omnipotence Argument. The fact that an omnipotent God cannot do some things does not disprove his existence; it merely shows that some activities are incompatible with omnipotence. Omnipotence does not mean the ability to do what is impossible; it entails the ability to do what is actually possible. If it is a "limitation" on God to be unable to do evil or unable to cease to exist or unable to do the contradictory, then God is severely "limited." Actually this is a misuse of the world *limited*. The only "limits" God has are the unlimited possibilities of his own nature and will. God cannot make a stone heavier than he can handle; that is impossible. If he can create it, then he can control it. He alone holds it in existence, and he alone can snuff it out of existence, and this is as effective a control as one could imagine!

Thus a world where creatures are free but either no evil or no seemingly unjustified evil occurs may be *logically possible* but not *actually achievable*, given free will and the conditions for human redemption. For example, in a theistic world with a God and a heaven and a hell, it is logically possible that everyone would choose to go to heaven. However, this is not actually achievable (without violating human choice) as long as someone freely decides not to go to heaven. As C. S. Lewis aptly put it, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, chose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell."[511]

The Antinomy-of-Perfections Argument. Traditional theism claims that God possesses absolutely all perfections. But this seems impossible since some perfections are mutually exclusive. How can one and the same being possess both love and wrath? God cannot be both all-knowing and all-loving. If he were all-knowing, then he would know with certainty what will happen in the future.[512] But if the future is certain, then when tomorrow comes humans are not really free to do other than what God already knows they must do. However, an all-loving God would not coerce or force humans to do anything against their will; love is never determinative or coercive. Love always permits the loved one the freedom to accept or reject the love. Hence, God cannot be both all-knowing *and* all-loving at the same time. Other perfections in an infinite God may also be contradictory. For example, how can God be both absolutely good and absolutely free? If he is free then he is free to do evil. But if he is absolutely good, then he cannot do evil. But he cannot be both free and not free to do evil.

Theistic Response to the Antinomy-of-Perfections Argument. It is not contradictory to hold that certain things are incompatible with an absolutely and infinitely perfect being. Imperfections, evil, and limitations cannot be affirmed of God, but rather than disprove God's existence, these establish his perfection. God cannot be a stone; God cannot have a body. An infinite body or stone is a contradiction in terms, a limited limitless. These words must be understood of God only metaphorically and not metaphysically; they may be informative of what God *does* but are not truly descriptive of what God *is*.

Perfections such as love and justice are not incompatible in God. They are different, but not everything different is incompatible. The radii of a circle are different, but they are all compatible at the center. What is different, and sometimes at least seemingly incompatible, in this world is not necessarily incompatible in God. For example, there can be such a thing as just love or loving justice. Likewise, God can be all-knowing and all-loving, for his infinite knowledge may be exercised in allowing humans the freedom to do evil, not coercing them (in accordance with his love), so that through it all he may achieve (by infinite power) the greatest good for all (in accordance with his justice).

Whatever can be shown to be incompatible with the established perfections of God as infinitely just, loving, and so on does not disprove God; it merely shows that anything involving limitations or whatever is incompatible with his nature as holy love is, properly speaking, not a characteristic of God. In this regard, sometimes the *activity* of God is confused with his *attributes*. Wrath, for example, is not something God *is*; it is something he *does* out of consistency with his nature, because of what creatures have freely brought on themselves. The same sun that hardens clay also melts wax. The sun maintains its same consistent impact on the elements, but the receptivity of the object on which it shines will determine whether the same rays will soften or harden it. So it is with the heart of a human, according to theism. God's *attributes* do not change, but his *acts* do change in accordance with the change in human attitudes toward him.

The Antinomy-of-Creation Argument. On the one hand, many theists maintain that God is a necessary Being and that his will is one with his essence. But from this some nontheists argue that whatever God wills he must will necessarily.[513] On the other hand, theists also maintain that God was free not to create. But it is impossible for creation to flow both necessarily and freely from God. Either God is not necessary (which is contrary to traditional theism) or else creation is necessary (which is also contrary to the theistic view that God freely created the world). In either case the traditional theistic God cannot exist.

Theistic Response to the Antinomy-of-Creation Argument. It is not contradictory to hold that God is necessary while holding at the same time that creation is contingent.[514] The only thing a necessary Being must will necessarily and unconditionally is the necessity of his own nature. Everything else may be willed contingently. There is no necessity in creation that demands that God will it to exist, for its existence is not a necessary but a contingent one. According to theism, God was free to create or not to create. This is perfectly consistent even for an all-loving God. Love does not *demand* that God create anything else. Of course, when God chose to create, it was out of love that he did so. An infinitely loving Being does not have to *do* anything; he simply has to *be* the infinitely loving God that by nature he is. Of course, no one else would know that he is loving unless he performed some loving act. But one does not have to *do* something in order to *be* something. One must exist in order to perform, but he need not perform in order to exist. In brief, God must will his own Being necessarily, but he need not will anything else necessarily; all else may flow freely from his love. In point of fact, the theist may argue just the opposite of this atheistic objection. The theist may contend that it is of the

very nature of love to act freely and not under compulsion. Love is exercised freely or not at all. Hence, if creation flows from a loving God, then it must flow freely. It is necessary to the very nature of love that it act freely.

The Antinomy-of-Time Argument. Many theists contend that the world had a beginning in time. The world is not eternal; only God is eternal. But if the world began in time, then there must have been a time before time began.[515] It is, however, impossible to have time before time began. Hence, there cannot be a theistic God who created the world in time.

Theistic Response to the Antinomy-of-Time Argument. This argument wrongly supposes that time is already there as a continuum or reality outside God and that God chose a moment in time to create the world. However, for a theist there is nothing outside of God that God did not create. It is more proper for theism to speak of the creation *of* time than of a creation *in* time. Time is a concomitant of a created and changing world. Hence, time began when the changing process of this world was caused by God. So nothing is *chronological* before creation for God. God was *ontological* prior to creation, but there was no time before there was time (i.e., a temporal world). The only thing prior to time was eternity. The atheistic antinomy of time does not disprove God; at best it merely corrects a mistaken way of speaking about time and creation.

Some Alleged Disproofs of God from the Nature of Humanity and Freedom

There is yet another source for atheistic arguments—namely, the nature of humanity or of human freedom. We may separate out four such arguments, two from Sartre, one from Freud, and one from Feuerbach.

Disproof of God from the Nature of Human Freedom. If I am free, Sartre (1905–80) says, then there cannot be a God.[516] Freedom implies responsibility for my actions. But if there is a God, then I am not fully responsible for my actions. If there is a God then I cannot even be free, for my freedom would be circumscribed by his divine determination. But I am free; in fact, I am fully free. I cannot choose not to be free, for the choice not to be free is itself an act of my freedom that reveals how free I am. My freedom, then, eliminates the possibility of God, for either I am absolutely free to determine myself or else I am not free because God has determined me. But I am absolutely free to determine myself. Hence, there is no God.

Theistic Response to Human Freedom Argument. God's determination and human freedom are not necessarily an either/or situation; they can be a both/and situation. The theist can contend that God has determined that humans be free and may affirm, further, that God controls the world by what he knows humans will freely do. Knowing what people *will* do with their freedom is not the same as ordaining what they *must* do against their freedom. The latter would be incompatible with a loving God, but the former would appear to follow naturally from such a God. If love is persuasive but never coercive, then allowing humans to freely determine their own destiny would seem to be the loving way to create them. Hence, a theist could argue that the love of God necessitates that if he decides to create creatures that can love him, then they must be free; it is of the very necessary nature of love that other persons be able to respond freely to it.[517] God created the *fact* of freedom, but humans perform the *acts* of freedom. But since the effect preexists in the Cause, God knows from all eternity what humans will freely do (cf. Isa. 46:10).

Argument against God from Wish Fulfillment. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) cast serious doubt on the existence of God in the minds of many by his argument from illusion. He contended that belief in "God was based on wish fulfillment, a cosmic childhood neurosis that sought for a Father-Protector

or Cosmic Comforter."[518] It would be nice if there were a God just as it would be nice if there were a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But the very fact that our belief in God is based merely on this *wish* for comfort from the tragedies of life makes it highly suspect.

Theistic Response to Wish-Fulfillment Argument. First, neither Freud nor anyone else has proved that belief in God is based merely on a wish for there to be a God. As we shall see (in chap. 15), there are strong reasons to believe in God. Antony Flew, a convert from atheism to theism, expressed it well when he said, "In short, my discovery of the divine has been a pilgrimage of reason and not of faith."[519] Second, Freud never published any evidence for his view based on an examination of believing clients. That's like pronouncing one can't have a happy marriage based on ad hoc information from divorcees. Third, noted psychologist Dr. Paul Vitz wrote a classic book on examining the lives of famous atheists showing that they had no fathers or dysfunctional fathers. So it turns out that believers are not creating the Father; rather, atheists are killing the Father.[520] Indeed, Nietzsche, in his famous quote about the death of God, wrote: "God is dead. God remains dead. And *we have killed him*."[521]

Disproof of God from Existential Need. Sartre carries this kind of argument all the way to atheism. Not only does humanity wish that there be a God, but it is humanity's very project in life to realize God.[522] Humanity *needs* God in an existential way. An individual's whole being is a thrust toward becoming God. However, when we analyze the very nature of humanity's project to become God, we find that it is absurd. The for-itself can never become the in-itself; the uncaused can never become the self-caused. God is *ens causa sui* (a self-caused being), and such a being is impossible. Hence, "man is an empty bubble on the sea of nothingness," a useless passion. Humanity's very project as humanity is hopeless and meaningless. Life is without any transcendent or objective meaning. The only meaning life has is the subjective meaning we give it. There is no God who provides meaning for life from the outside.

Theistic Response to Unfulfilled-Need Argument. First of all, Sartre argues that humanity is a useless passion engaged in a futile project to be God. The for-itself can never attain the in-itself by itself. However, this no more disproves God than a person's dying of thirst proves there is no water anywhere. It may prove that some people never find God, but it does not prove there is no God to be found. A thirsty wanderer in the desert should not conclude that there is no water anywhere. Nor should people hungry for God conclude there is no God anywhere.

Second, Sartre wrongly conceived of God as a self-caused Being (rather than an uncaused Being). Of course, a self-caused Being is impossible since a cause is always ontologically prior to its effect, and God could not exist before he existed. However, theists do not view God as self-caused, but as uncaused. And there is no contradiction in needing such a God to fulfill one's needs.

One could argue that, rather than being a disproof of God, the deep-seated need for God is a reason supporting the claim that there is a God.[523] Is it not reasonable to assume that what humans really need is really available? It is true that some hungry people will never find food and some lonely persons will never find companions, but is it reasonable to conclude from their need that neither food nor friends can be found in this world? Would it not be just as reasonable, in view of the seemingly ineradicable need for God, that humans should continue their search on the assumption that God may be found? In short, Sartre's attempted disproof can be reversed into a plausible basis for inference that there is a God. As former atheist and respected scientist Dr. Francis Collins wrote, "Why would such a universal and uniquely human hunger [for God] exist, if it were not connected to some opportunity for fulfillment? Again, [C. S.] Lewis says it well: 'Creatures are not born with desires

unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water.'"[524]

Finally, even Sartre eventually realized the futility of his own view and turned to God to fulfill his need. His conversion in later life is documented in a French and American journal, where he confessed: "I do not feel that I am the product of chance, a speck of dust in the universe, but someone who was expected, prepared, prefigured. In short, a being whom only a Creator could put here."[525]

God Is Nothing but a Projection of Human Imagination. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72) argued that "the nature of God is *nothing else* than an expression of the nature of feeling," for the "object of any subject is *nothing* else than the subject's own nature taken objectively." Humanity by nature is a being that must project or objectify. Humanity alone, in contrast to animals, is self-conscious. But what is it that a human is conscious of in his or her objectifications? The answer is that religion is simply humans' consciousness of themselves, although they unwittingly call the object of their consciousness God. Feuerbach offers several forms of a basic disproof of God. First, human reason, will, and affection exist for their own sake and not as a means to something else. But, by definition, whatever exists for its own sake is God. Therefore, God is nothing but what we as humans will for its own sake. In addition, he argues that one can go no further than the limits of one's own nature; one cannot get outside of oneself. But humans can and do both feel and understand the Infinite. Hence, the infinity one feels is really the infinity of one's own nature. Humanity is "God." In Feuerbach's words, "What he (God) is to me is to me all that he is."[526]

It is noteworthy here that Marx followed Feuerbach's basic dialectical argument for atheism. Marx wrote of humanity as a being "who looked for the superman in the fantastic reality of heaven and found nothing there but the *reflection* of himself."[527] This Hegelian-based dialectical argument of Feuerbach has enjoyed wide acceptance in Marxist thought.

Theistic Response to Human-Projection Argument. Feuerbach's arguments for atheism depend for their validity on a premise that is self-defeating. The only way one could know that God is *nothing but* the projection of human imagination, emotion, and so on would be if one knew *more than* these mere projections. For unless one knows more than the contents of one's own consciousness, there is no way to be sure that one's own consciousness constitutes the limits of reality. The limits cannot be known unless they are transcended, and if they are transcended, then they are not the limits. It cannot be known where the wall ends unless one can see beyond it. Hence, the only way Feuerbach's disproof of God would work would be if the contents of reality were more than the limits of humanity's understanding. But if reality is more than humanity's understanding, then it cannot be true that reality is nothing but the objectification of humanity's understanding of itself. In short, if Feuerbach's argument is true, then it is false. It is self-defeating since it entails a premise that it purports explicitly to deny.

Some Alleged Disproofs of God from Chance

Argument against God from Chance. David Hume had argued against a designed universe on the basis that it is *possible* the world happened by chance. Given enough time and chance, any given combination can occur. The universe may be just a "happy accident" of chance reshuffling of particles in motion. Even if true, this argument would not establish the probability of atheism but simply its possibility. However, the argument may be strengthened into a *probable* disproof of God. If matter has been in motion eternally (and given the immensity of this universe), it would be reasonable to conclude that chance occurrence of life in some tiny corner of the universe is the best explanation.

Jacques Monod, contemporary French biologist, argues for chance as the only possible explanation of the evolution of humanity: "It is today the sole conceivable hypothesis, the only one that squares with observed and tested fact. And nothing warrants the supposition—or the hope—that on this score our position is likely ever to be revised."[528] In Monod's view, then, not only is chance a possible explanation of the universe, but, given the immensity of this universe and the time available for the origin of life, it is most probable that a "happy accident" could occur. And since it has occurred, it is reasonable to believe that it has occurred by blind chance.

Theistic Response to Argument from Chance. First of all, chance does not cause anything. Chance is merely the intersection of two lines of causality. Only forces cause events, and there are only two kinds of forces or causes: natural causes and intelligent causes. And certain kinds of effects call for intelligent causes, as has been shown by the proponents of the Intelligent Design movement.[529] Further, there are many loopholes in the chance argument for atheism. The chance hypothesis always leaves open the *possibility* that there is a God and that the world did not happen by chance. If atheism can be possible and even probable by chance, then so can theism.

Second, the immensity of the universe does not help the chance hypothesis, for the mere possibilities within the unknown universe cannot outweigh the probability in the known universe.[530] Further, the anthropic principle argues that the entire universe from its very inception was fine-tuned for the emergence of human life.[531]

Third, allowing more time for chance occurrence does not help the argument, since the longer the time for evolution, the more likely it will be that things will be in their original random position. The longer eggs are scrambled, the *less* organized they become. So the longer the time period, the more likely that things will be in the state in which they began.[532]

Fourth, the odds against a chance explanation of the universe are very great. Former atheist Sir Fred Hoyle estimated the chances at one in ten to the forty-thousandth power. So there must be an intelligent cause.[533] The design argument for God does not depend on chance but on specified complexity, for which the only known cause is intelligence.[534] It is not the lack of evidence for a natural explanation but the presence of evidence for an intelligent cause that is at the heart of the design argument. The argument is founded on how repeated observation in the present has discovered that the only known cause of the specified complexity in DNA (which is mathematically identical to that in a human language) is an intelligent cause. Probability or improbability is not the essential key to the argument.

Argument against God from Multiple Universes. Another form of the chance argument is to posit multiple universes. For in an unlimited number of universes the probabilities against a chance occurrence of this universe are eliminated. This universe becomes a not-so-lucky shot compared to all the other universes that did not turn out this way.

Hence, the apparent design here can be explained as "one in a million"—that is, what you can expect when you have a million universes.

Theistic Response to the Argument from Multiple Universes. In response, several things should be observed. First of all, this is speculation, not science. The only universe we have to make scientific observations and inferences from is the universe we have. The atheist has left the realm of science and is flying in the thin air of speculations.

Second, even if there were other universes that showed no evidence for design such as we have in living cells, it would not prove this universe was not designed. Suppose someone builds a beautiful garden depicting the American flag in an otherwise large patch of weeds. Does the surrounding lack of design destroy the argument from design to a designer for the American flag made out of flowers?

An Evaluation of Atheism

Some Contributions of Atheism

Atheists have made significant contributions in two areas toward building a consistent worldview. First, they have helped to eliminate some contradictory concepts of God. Second, they have provided a corrective for some misconceptions of God and his relation to the world.

The Criticism of the Principle of Sufficient Reason Is Correct. Atheists have been correct in pointing out that the principle of sufficient reason—that everything needs a cause or explanation—leads to an infinite regress and not to God.[535] If *everything* needs a cause, then so does God, and so on infinitely. If the principle is all-encompassing, then one may not special-plead that God is the one exception to it. Why make God the exception? Why not just start with the world as a whole and say that the universe does not need a cause? Sufficient reason does not lead to an infinite God but to an infinite regress.

Not All Conceptions about God Are Impossible. Atheists are correct in pointing out the fallacy of understanding omnipotence as the ability to do anything. Even God cannot do what is logically contradictory or what is actually impossible. It is logically contradictory for God to make square circles, and it is actually impossible for God to sin. A God who could cease being God or cease being good would not be the theistic God. There are many things impossible for a theistic God. He cannot change his nature; he cannot will contradictory things; he cannot be overpowered by a creature; he cannot achieve certain ends without certain means (e.g., he cannot be worshiped unless he creates beings who are free). Atheists are certainly correct in placing some logical restrictions on the notion of omnipotence. God can do only what is *actually possible* to do; the contradictory is not possible for even an omnipotent God.

Atheists have pointed out numerous other flaws of theistic conceptions. There cannot be a time before time; God cannot be properly understood in terms of finite, anthropomorphic imagery; a totally static God cannot be dynamically related to the changing world; this is not the best of all possible worlds (there are evils and injustices in it); and so on.

Critique of Atheism as a Worldview

None of the above arguments or contributions of atheism really destroys theism, for most of them turn out to be helpful refinements of theism; the rest are invalid criticisms. It remains for us to do two things here: we must show the invalidity in the arguments for atheism, and we must show the impossibility or at least untenability of the atheistic position.

The Invalidity in the Arguments for Atheism. Each argument for atheism is invalid. It is either based on a misconception or else overlooks some possibility that would avoid atheism. We will treat each of the above arguments for atheism in the order presented.

1. *Causality Does Not Lead to an Impossible, Self-Caused Being.* The principle of existential causality does not lead to a contradictory, self-caused Being. The principle of sufficient reason, by demanding that everything needs a cause, does lead to such a Being. To cause one's own being, one would have to exist (in order to cause) and not exist (in order to be caused), which is impossible. But since only finite, dependent beings need a cause, the principle of existential causality leads to an infinite and necessary Being that does not need a cause and is not contradictory. So if causality is

understood as Aquinas understood it, then atheists have lost their argument from causality against the existence of God.

2. *Working to Eliminate Suffering Does Not Disprove God.* The atheist's argument that working against God's means (suffering) of attaining the end of the greatest good would eliminate theism is wrong for two reasons. First, at best the atheist's argument would eliminate only this *solution* to the problem of evil; it would not eliminate *God*. The theist may agree that God must achieve the greatest good possible, and may also agree that permitting evil is necessary to achieving the greatest good. But it does not follow from this that working against evil would eliminate God. At best this would mean only that in working against evil one is in some sense working against God. It would not prove that there is no God. But even this conclusion does not follow, for it may be that God wills only to *permit* (via human freedom) but not to *promote* suffering as a means to the greatest good. A parent may permit the pain of an operation in order to save the life of his or her child without actually promoting pain for the child.

Here too the atheist's argument is self-defeating. From the atheist's premises one may draw a strong theistic conclusion as follows: if God must work to achieve the greatest good possible in this world, and if permitting evil is the means of achieving the greatest good, then it follows that permitting evil is the best way for God to achieve the best world, for if God had done otherwise, it would have been less than his best. And if the atheist desires to back off the premise that God must do his best, then he has lost the force of his argument against God, for if God does not have to do his best, then one has no legitimate grounds for complaining that this world is not the best that God could have done. This is in many ways a good world despite the evil it contains, and this would be compatible with a God who does not have to create the best world but simply a good one. However, if God must do his best, then permitting evil in order to accomplish his best would seem to be the best way for God to operate. Some virtues (like patience and courage) are not possible without evil, and the highest degree of some pleasures and virtues (like forgiveness and reconciliation) are not achievable without some evil or pain. Hence, it would be necessary for God to permit the necessary first-order evils in order to achieve the second-order and greater goods.

3. *Unexplained Evil in This World Is Not Necessarily Unjustified.* Atheists are right in pointing out that there is unexplained evil in the world. There are cases of *apparently* unjustified evil. However, this does not mean it is *actually* unjustifiable. Nor does it mean that if justice is not done in all cases in *this world*, justice will never be done in *the next world*. Further, it does not mean that God has no purpose in allowing this evil any more than amputations have no good purpose. Some things with a good purpose have evil by-products. Even in a just war there can be collateral damage of innocent lives. Hence, so-called gratuitous evil can be part of a universe where the overall process is to produce a greater good.

The Untenability of the Atheistic Position. Strangely enough, atheists have provided some of the most convincing arguments against atheism. Many of their arguments boomerang into a disproof of atheism or else entail a plausible assumption that there is a God.

1. *One Must Assume God in Order to Disprove God.* The above analysis has shown in several ways that one must assume God in order to disprove God. For example, to disprove God via evil one must assume the equivalent of God by way of an ultimate standard of justice beyond this world. As C. S. Lewis put it (see also chap. 10 above, under "2. *Inadequate View of Moral Perfection*"), "[As an atheist] my argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a

straight line."[536] The atheist's very argument from injustice implies an ultimate standard of justice, which demands an ultimate Moral Law Giver for that moral law.

2. *An Omniscient God Knows a Good Purpose for Everything.* Further, just because we don't know a cause for some evil does not mean that an omniscient and omnibenevolent Mind does not. If there is such a Being, that Being would automatically know a good reason for permitting evil, for if God is all-knowing, he knows a reason for everything. And if he is all-good, then he knows a good reason for permitting every evil. When it comes to knowing or not knowing a good reason for some evil, it is far more likely that we are dull-witted than it is that God is dead.

As for the argument that it is not likely that there is a good reason for evil for which we know no good reason—because, for instance, we have no good reason to believe Adolf Eichmann had a good reason for killing Jews—we simply note that this is a false analogy. While we have no reason to believe that a finite, sinful person like Eichmann has a good reason for killing Jews, we do have a good reason to believe an absolutely good God does have a good reason for everything he does. Why? Because he has proved himself good in the past and present (Acts 14:16–17; cf. James 1:17) and because he is all-good (omnibenevolent) by his very nature. Thus the analogy between Eichmann and God is a false one, since it is comparing a finite, sinful person with an infinite, sinless Person. Such a Being (God) does have a good purpose, even when we do not know what it is (see Deut. 29:29; Rom. 11:33).

3. *An Omnipotent God Will Defeat Evil.* What is more, if God is all-powerful, then he can defeat evil. And if he is all good, then he will defeat evil. That evil is not *yet* defeated does not disprove God. Rather, it proves that he will yet do it in the future. How do we know? Because by his very nature he *can* and *would.* So if he has not yet done it, then he *will* yet do it!

4. *The Ontological Disproof of God Boomerangs*. Likewise the ontological disproof of God entails making a necessary statement about existence that claims that necessary statements cannot be made about existence. The same kind of self-defeating consequence follows from any kind of absolute denial about reality. One cannot meaningfully affirm that reality has no ultimate meaning (as in God) without thereby making the claim that one's statement is ultimately meaningful about reality. Most informed atheists are sophisticated enough to recognize this. But by qualifying and backing off from the universality and absoluteness of their claim, they dilute the strength of their argument to something far short of a proof. It would take absolute knowledge to absolutely eliminate God. But absolute knowledge can be derived only from God. Hence, to be an atheist in the absolute sense, one would have to assume God in order to disprove God.

5. *Many Atheistic Arguments Are Reversible into Reasons for God.* Even in the weaker, less universal form of the arguments for atheism, two points can be made. First, not only are many of the atheistic arguments self-defeating, but they entail premises from which one could plausibly conclude the existence of God. So rather than supporting the probability of atheism, these arguments actually do the reverse. The arguments from evil, freedom, and human need all call out *for* God, rather than *against* him. Second, the argument from causality turns out to be reversible into the cosmological argument for the existence of God, for if every contingent, finite, or dependent being needs a cause, then it would seem to follow that there must be a Necessary, Infinite, and Independent Cause of the existence of every other thing that exists. The detailed elaboration of this argument will be the subject of the next chapter.

6. *Atheism Has No Adequate Explanation for Basic Metaphysical Questions.* As a worldview, atheism provides an insufficient explanation for several very significant questions about reality. An atheist must assume the following meaningless or untenable positions.

a. An atheist must assume that the personal rose from the impersonal, that matter plus time and chance gave rise to mind. It seems more reasonable to hold that Mind formed matter than that matter gave rise to mind. Former notorious atheist Antony Flew wrote: "It is simply inconceivable that any material matrix or field can generate agents who think and act. . . . A force field does not plan or think. So . . . the world of living, conscious, thinking beings has to originate in a living Source, a Mind."[537]

b. Atheism asserts that the potential gives rise to the actual, that all the world's achievements were latent in the eternal random swirling of tiny atoms. But it seems much more reasonable to believe that something actualized the potential of the universe than to believe that the potentiality actualized itself. Potentials do not actualize themselves any more than steel forms itself into skyscrapers. Potentials must be actualized by some actualizer, and the theist claims that world potentials must be actualized by some World-Actualizer (i.e., God). This claim seems eminently more reasonable than the claim of atheism.

c. Atheism has no adequate answer to the question, Why is there something rather than nothing at all? It does not suffice to say that the world is just "there" or "given." How did it get there when it did not have to be there? Who gave it when it did not have to be given? The nonexistence of the whole—even the universe as a whole—is actually possible. If not, then it is an eternal necessary Being who is more than (i.e., transcending) all the parts and changing relationships. But this is precisely what the theists call God—namely, an eternal necessary Being who transcends all the changing parts and relationships in the universe. If, however, the universe is not necessary, then it follows that it might *not be*. In this case there is no explanation in atheism as to why the universe *is* rather than *is not*. In the final analysis atheism must hold the absurd conclusion that something comes from nothing—that is, that nonbeing is the ground upon which being rests. This seems highly unreasonable.

Summary and Conclusion

As shown above, atheism provides some valuable correctives to and modifications of theism. Many of its arguments either correct misconceptions some theists have of God or of his relation to the world, or else expose contradictory theistic concepts. Atheists have been active as well in contributing to humanistic causes and earnest in scientific endeavors.

However, as a total worldview atheism does not measure up. First, its arguments are invalid and often self-defeating. Second, many atheistic arguments are really reversible into reasons for believing in God. Finally, atheism provides no solution to basic metaphysical questions regarding the existence of the universe or the origin of personality and the actualization of the world process. Atheists must believe that something was caused by nothing, that potentials actualize themselves, and that matter generated mind. It seems much more reasonable to believe in a God who made something where there was nothing, who actualized the potentials that could not actualize themselves, and whose Mind formed matter. The arguments to support this belief will be provided in the next chapter.

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15
Theism

In part 1 of this book it was concluded that the laws of logic apply to reality; reality is thinkable. One cannot meaningfully entertain the thought that reality cannot be thought. From this were posited certain undeniable first principles of being or reality (see chap. 8). One of these is the principle of noncontradiction. This can be used as a test for the falsity of a position. Any view that contradicts itself or destroys itself in the process or act of affirming itself is self-defeating and false. We further argued that a worldview—that is, a philosophical position about all that is—cannot be established as true simply on its noncontradictoriness, since every major worldview might be internally consistent. Other principles must be brought into play.

In part 2 we have argued two things thus far, one explicitly and the other implicitly. First, we have argued that every major nontheistic worldview may be internally noncontradictory, but that each is, nonetheless, somehow self-defeating and false. Second, by implication, theism, the only remaining noncontradictory view, is true by the process of elimination. In this final chapter of part 2 we hope to show that there are sufficient positive reasons for believing that theism is true on the basis of the whole list of first principles of being. With these we will first present an argument for the existence of the theistic God described in the Bible.

A Proof for the Existence of the Theistic God of the Bible

Stating the First Principles of Reality

In part 1 (chap. 8) we developed a test for the truth of a worldview. Then we tested all the nontheistic worldviews (chaps. 9–14) and found them wanting. Now in this chapter we will endeavor to show that the self-evident first principles of being support a theistic worldview. First, we will restate the principles.

1. **Being is.** That is, something exists. This is called *the principle of existence.* This is undeniable since the one who denies it must exist in order to deny it. Hence, while the *source* of first principles is a basic intuition about being, the *test* for their truth is *undeniability.* That is, they cannot be denied without affirming them (either directly or indirectly) in the very denial itself.
2. **Being is being.** This is known as *the principle of identity*. Being is identical to being. A thing is identical to itself. Again, this is literally undeniable since it cannot be denied unless it is implied, for one must assume things are identical to themselves even to deny that they are.
3. **Being is not nonbeing.** This is called *the principle of noncontradiction*. Opposites cannot both be true at the same time and in the same sense. This too is undeniable since the claim that opposites can both be true assumes that the opposite of this claim cannot be true.

4. **Either being or nonbeing.** This is *the principle of excluded middle*. There is nothing between being and nonbeing. Hence, something must either be or not be. It can't both be and not be. This too is undeniable since the denial of it ("Both being and nonbeing") is a contradiction.
5. **Nonbeing cannot produce being.** This is *the principle of causality*. Nothing cannot cause[538] anything since nothing does not even exist, and what does not exist cannot cause anything. Only something can produce something. This too is reducible to a self-evident principle since it is contradictory to affirm that it both exists (in order to cause) and does not exist.
6. **Being causes being similar to itself.** This is *the principle of analogy.* An effect resembles its efficient cause. Like produces like. Being shares being, for this is all that it has to share. Being cannot give what it has not got. But what it gives (i.e., being) it must have had to give.

From these principles, many other undeniable conclusions can be drawn, such as the following:

7. A being can be either necessary or contingent but not both. This is based on the principle of excluded middle (#3).
8. A necessary Being cannot produce another necessary Being (#3). The opposite of this is reducible to a contradiction because (a) a necessary Being by its nature cannot come to be or cease to be, and (b) the being that is caused by a necessary Being comes to be (which is contradictory).
9. A contingent being cannot cause another contingent being (#3). This is because a contingent being is one that could not-be (i.e., could be nothing), and if it caused another being, then nonbeing would be producing being (which is contradictory).
10. A necessary Being is a Being of Pure Actuality, with no potentiality. This is so since a necessary Being has no potentiality to not exist. If a necessary Being exists, then it must exist necessarily, with no possibility not to exist.
11. A Being of Pure Actuality cannot produce another being with pure actuality. The being that is produced by a Being of Pure Actuality must have both actuality and potentiality, for this created being has the potentiality not to be, which Pure Actuality does not have.
12. Every being caused by a Being of Pure Actuality must be both like and unlike its Cause (#6). It must be like its Cause in its actuality, and it must be unlike its cause in its potentiality. And what is both like and unlike its cause is similar (or analogous) to it.
13. I am a contingent being. This is so since I undeniably exist (#2), and I am neither a necessary Being nor an impossible being. I am not an impossible being since I do exist. And I am not a necessary Being because I change or come to be (which a necessary Being cannot do). Hence, I am a contingent being. But only a necessary Being can cause a contingent being (#9). Even a pantheist (see chap. 11), who claims to be identical to God, admits that he or she came to be in that state of "enlightenment," and thus was not always in it.
14. Therefore, a necessary Being (of Pure Actuality) exists that causes me to exist.
15. This necessary Being is a Being of Pure Actuality (with no potentiality) and has certain necessary attributes:
    a. It cannot change (= is *immutable*) since it has no potential for change.
    b. It cannot be temporal (= is *eternal*) since that involves change.
    c. It cannot be material (= is *immaterial*) since that involves change.
    d. It cannot be finite (= is *infinite*) since it has no potentiality to limit it.

e. It cannot be divisible (= is *simple*) since it has no potential to be divided.
f. It must be an *uncaused* being since it is a necessary Being, and a necessary Being cannot be caused to come to be. So, it can't be caused. Nor can it be self-caused, which is a contradiction. Hence, it must be an uncaused being.
g. It must be only *One* being since there can't be two or more infinite Beings or two or more Beings of Pure Actuality; there is no way they could differ in their Being, for they are both the same kind of Being. And beings cannot differ in the very respect in which they are the same.
h. It must be infinitely knowing (= *omniscient*) since I am a knowing being that it caused to exist, and a cause cannot give what it does not have to give (# 6).
i. It must be all-powerful (= *omnipotent*) since it is infinite, and it has the power to cause a finite being to exist.
j. It must be an absolutely *morally perfect* Being since it causes moral beings to exist, and it cannot share what it does not have to share (#6).
k. It must be a *personal* Being since it made personal beings, and the effect is similar to its efficient cause (#6).

Now one infinite, uncaused, personal, morally perfect, all-knowing, all-powerful Being that caused finite being(s) like itself to exist is what is meant by a theistic God. Hence, a theistic God exists. So, the theistic worldview is true. And everything opposed to a theistic worldview is false (#3), such as deism, finite godism, pantheism, panentheism, polytheism, and atheism (chaps. 9–14).

The Overall Logic of This Argument That the Theistic God Exists[539]

The argument for theism can be restated this way:

1. Some things undeniably exist (e.g., I cannot deny my own existence).
2. But my nonexistence is possible, for I am not a necessary Being but one that changes or comes to be.
3. Whatever has the possibility not to exist is currently caused to exist by another.
4. There cannot be an infinite regress of current causes of existence.
5. Therefore, a first uncaused cause of my current existence exists.
6. This uncaused cause must be infinite, unchanging, all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-perfect.
7. This infinitely all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good Being is what is meant by a theistic God.
8. Therefore, a theistic God exists.
9. This God who exists is identical to the God described in the Bible.
10. Therefore, the God described in the Bible exists.

Further Elaboration of Each Step in This Theistic Proof

With this outline in mind we will elaborate each point in detail. Since the argument cannot validly begin in the thin air of pure thought, it must establish itself firmly in the soil of undeniable existence.

1. Something Exists.

It is undeniable that something exists. No one can deny his or her own existence without affirming it. One must exist in order to deny that one exists, which is self-defeating. But whatever is undeniable is true, and what is unaffirmable is false. Hence, it is undeniably true that I exist.

2. My Nonexistence Is Possible.

My existence must fit one of three logical categories: impossible, possible, or necessary. And reality is subject to the law of noncontradiction; reality cannot be contradictory. But since my existence is neither impossible nor necessary, it follows that it must be possible for me not to exist.

First, my existence is not impossible. I do exist and undeniably so. But what exists proves that its existence is actually possible. Only impossible things (like square circles) cannot exist. My actuality proves that it is possible for me to exist. Hence, my existence is not impossible.

Second, my existence is not necessary. A necessary existence is that of a being that cannot *not* exist. The nonexistence of a necessary Being is impossible. If there is a necessary Being, then it must exist necessarily. There is no other way a necessary Being could exist than to exist necessarily.

(a) What is more, a necessary existence would be *pure actuality*, with no potentiality whatsoever. If it had any potentiality with regard to its existence, then it would be *possible* for it not to exist. But this is precisely what a necessary existence cannot do; it is not possible for a necessary existence *not* to exist. Therefore, a necessary existence would be pure actuality with no potentiality in its being whatsoever.

(b) Also, a necessary existence would be *changeless*. Whatever changes must have the possibility for change. If change were impossible, then it could not change. But a necessary Being has no possibility of change whatsoever.

(c) A necessary existence would have to be a *nontemporal* (eternal) and *nonspatial* existence. If space and time involve change of position and moment, then a necessary existence could not be either spatial or temporal in its being. Its being cannot change, and both space and time involve change.

(d) There can be only *one* necessary existence. What is pure actuality must be one since there is no way for one thing to differ from another in its being unless there is some real potentiality for differentiation. But in a being of pure actuality there is no potential whatsoever. Hence, there is no real differentiation in it. All of it is one; there cannot be two or more, since neither would really be different from the other in its being.

(e) A necessary existence would have to be *simple* and undivided. It could not be composed of different parts or elements. There is no principle of differentiation in it; all is simply one. Further, whatever is composed could be decomposed or destroyed. But it is impossible to destroy the existence of a necessary Being. If it exists at all, then it *must* be, and it cannot *not* be. Hence, a necessary existence must be simple and undivided.

(f) A necessary existence would have to be *infinite* in whatever attributes it possesses. If it is a knowing being, then it must be all-knowing (omniscient). If it is powerful, then it must be all-powerful (omnipotent). If it is good, then it must be all-good (absolutely perfect). The reason for this is simple enough: only what has potentiality can be limited. Limitation means that which differentiates the sphere of one thing from another. Pure actuality *is* being pure and simple; everything else only *has* being in one form or another, depending on its limiting potential. Pure actuality would be unlimited by any potential in and of itself. The only limitations on pure actuality are those of possibility outside it. Even pure actuality could not know or perform the impossible.

(g) A necessary Being must be an *uncaused* being. Whatever is caused passes from potentiality to actuality. But a necessary Being has no potentiality in its being, and, hence, it cannot change.

Therefore, it is clear that a necessary Being cannot be caused. And since a self-caused being is impossible, it must be concluded that a necessary Being is an uncaused being.

Now from the above description of what a necessary existence would be, if there were one, it is both obvious and undeniable that I am not a necessary existence. First, I am a changing being. I change in space, time, and knowledge. I do not always live the same moment or in the same place or relation to the world. This is an obvious fact of my experience. Further, it is an undeniable fact of experience that I change in knowledge. Even if I claim to have come to the realization that my knowledge is unchanging, I have not avoided changing in my knowledge, for anyone who "comes to realize" or know something has changed in his knowledge. There was the state of realization before he believed, which was followed by the different state in which he came to believe that he is unchanging in knowledge. Hence, it is really impossible to come to know that one has unchanging knowledge. If there is anyone with unchanging knowledge, he would always have known it. But if I change in any way, then I am not a necessary Being, because a necessary Being is both simple and unchanging. As simple, it has no parts and, hence, cannot be partly anything. Whatever it is, it is wholly and completely. In addition, an unchanging being could not know anything in a changing way. Things could change, but its knowledge of them could not. All it knows it would have to know always. It follows, therefore, that I am not a necessary existence, for I know in a changing way, and a necessary existence could not possibly know in a changing way.

Second, I am not alone. I use language, but language[540] is a common medium of communication shared with others. This implies that others exist. Even the denial that language is a medium by which we speak to others is an attempt to speak to others through language. Authors publish articles on the assumption that there are others to read them.

We are now in a position to put the argument together. I exist; this cannot be denied. My existence cannot be impossible since I actually exist. Nor can my existence be necessary since my existence implies both change and multiplicity, neither of which a necessary Being can have. The only remaining alternative is that my existence must be a possible existence (i.e., contingent). That is, I am but I might not be. My nonexistence is actually possible. I can come to be, and I can cease to be. I am a "may-be" but not a "must-be." Although I exist, nevertheless I have the potentiality within my very being not to exist. I could go out of existence at any moment. I am contingent as well as limited and changing.

3. Whatever Has the Possibility for Nonexistence Is Currently Caused to Exist by Another.

Whatever has the possibility of nonexistence must be caused to exist by another because potentiality is not actuality. What is but could possibly not be has only a potential existence. It has existence, but it also has the possibility of nonexistence. Now the very existence of this potential existent is either self-caused, caused by another, or uncaused; there are no other possibilities. But it cannot be self-caused since this is impossible. Neither can it be uncaused. If it were uncaused, then mere possibility would be the ground of actuality. But nothing cannot produce something.[541] It must be concluded, then, that whatever has the possibility for nonexistence must be caused to exist by another. Let us now elaborate the argument.

First of all, by "causality" we mean efficient causality or the actualization of a potential. A "cause," then, is that which effects a transition from potentiality to actuality. Further, no being, whether contingent or necessary, can be self-caused. A self-caused being would have to be ontologically prior to itself. It would have to be simultaneously in a state of actuality and a state of

potentiality with regard to being, which is impossible. Potentiality is not actuality; nothing is not something. A cause of being must exist in order to cause something. And what is to be caused must not exist, or else its existence does not need to be caused. Hence, in order to cause one's own existence one must simultaneously exist and not exist, which is impossible.

Second, a being that could possibly not exist cannot be uncaused. Its being is only possible and not necessary. It is not a must-be but only a may-be that is. But the possible is not the actual; mere possibility does not account for actuality. The impossible cannot be, the possible can be, and the necessary must be. The impossible can never come to be, the necessary can never come to be or cease to be, but the possible can come to be and cease to be. But whatever can come to be must be caused to be, for something cannot be caused by nothing; the mere potential for being cannot actualize itself. If it is an actualized potentiality, then it either actualized itself or else it was actualized by something outside itself. But no being can actualize its own existence. The actualization of a potentiality is what is meant by causality. Hence, to actualize one's own potential for being would mean to cause one's own being, which is impossible. However, since the existence of possible beings has actualized, it follows that there is a cause of existence outside them that actualizes their existence. In short, the actual does not come from the potential unless something outside it actualizes its potential. No potential can actualize itself. The potential for being does not account for the existence of something. Many things that could possibly exist do not exist (e.g., centaurs, mermaids, and Pegasus). Why, then, do other things that might not exist actually exist? The only adequate explanation for why there is something rather than nothing at all is that the something that could be nothing is caused to exist by something that cannot be nothing. In brief, all contingent beings are caused by a necessary Being. Whatever is but might not be is dependent on what is but cannot *not* be.

Another way to see the need for a Cause of all possible beings is to analyze the very nature or kind of existence it has. If there were a necessary Being it would be pure actuality with no potentiality in its being whatsoever. Impossible beings have neither actuality nor potentiality; they are not and cannot be. But possible beings have both potentiality and actuality in their very being. They consist of coprinciples of being. In Latin, their *ens* (being) is composed of *esse* (acts of existence) and *essentia* (essence). But whatever is composed of *esse* and essence must be caused to exist by another. *Esse* cannot cause itself, and essence cannot cause *esse*. *What* something is does not explain the fact *that* it is, unless it is a necessary Being, whose very essence is to exist. But it is not of the essence of a possible being, such as I am, to exist. It is of my essence that I might not exist even though I do indeed exist. Hence, since it is not of my essence to exist and since it is only of the essence of a necessary Being to exist, it follows that we must seek for the ground or cause of every possible being such as I am.[542]

There is another way to see the need for a cause of every contingent or possible being. An infinite and unchanging being must be uncaused. But there can be only one such being, for Pure Actuality is simple and indivisible, having no potentiality for division. Therefore, every other being must be caused by another, since to be self-caused is impossible. Since I am not a necessary Being, it follows that I (and every other contingent being that exists) must be caused to exist by a cause beyond me (us).

Before leaving this point we should stress that all efficient causality of existence is *current*. What is called for is not a cause for my *becoming* but for my continued *be-ing*.[543] The argument rests on conserving causality, not originating causality. The reason for this is very simple: I am right *now* a contingent being; it is not that I once was contingent when I came to be but now am not. Whatever was once contingent will always be contingent, for whatever can come to be is not a necessary Being. A necessary Being cannot come to be; it must ever be and may never not be. This means that whenever I

am contingent and however long I remain contingent, I will always need a cause of my existence. It is misleading to speak of "existence" as though it were something (a noun) one could get all at once in a package to keep for the rest of one's life. More properly, we should speak of our existing (a verbal form). What we have is not really existence but a continual, moment-by-moment process of existing. We do not have being but continuous *be*-ing. What causes me to be when I need not be nor continue to be? This is the real metaphysical question that only theism can answer adequately. All causality of existing or be-ing is simultaneous and current. The cause of *becoming* may be before the effect, but the cause of *be-ing* must be concurrent with the effect. The cause of my here-and-now existence must be vertical and not linear. The artist is the cause of the becoming of the painting but not of its continued being. The artist dies but the painting continues to be. Likewise, the parents are the cause of the coming-to-be of the child, but something else must be the cause of the child's continuing-to-be, since the child continues to exist without the parents.

4. There Cannot Be an Infinite Regress of Current Causes of Existence.

Since all causality of existence is current and simultaneous, it can be readily seen why an infinite regress is impossible.[544] A chain of causes, however short or long, wherein every cause is simultaneously both actual and potential with regard to its existence (existing), is clearly impossible. If there were a series of causes wherein each cause was both causing existence and having its existence caused at the same moment, then it would follow that they were both potential and actual simultaneously.

Furthermore, at least one (if not all) of the causes would be an impossible, self-caused being, for in every series where causality is occurring *at least one* cause must be causing (and maybe all of them). But in an infinite series *every* cause is being caused by another. If there were found one cause that was causing but not being caused, it would be the uncaused cause, which the infinite series seeks to avoid. Hence, the *one* (or more) cause that is doing the causing of *every* cause must be causing itself, since it too is being caused (as are all the other causes) by the causality in the series. But the only causality in the series is being given to the series by that cause itself. Hence, that one cause would be causing itself; that is, it would be a self-caused being, which is impossible.

Another way to put the impossibility of an infinite regress of current causes of contingent beings is to point out that either the series as a whole is a sufficient ground for all contingent beings or it is not. If not, then there must be some being outside the series on which the series is grounded. In this case the series would be dependent on a cause beyond it, and, hence, it would not avoid the theistic conclusion that there must be a cause beyond the alleged series. Either the causality that is admitted to be in the series comes from within the series or it comes from beyond the series. If it comes from beyond the series, then the series is dependent on a cause that is independent of the series. If the causality is within the series, then there is simultaneous mutual self-causality going on. But adding up an infinite number of dependent beings within a series does not provide an adequate ground for them. If each being is a *caused* being, as they are acknowledged to be by the very nature of the series, where every cause is being caused by (= is an effect of) another, then adding up all these *effects* does not provide a *cause* for these effects. No number of effects equals a cause. If the parts are contingent, then the sum total of all parts is also contingent. Making the series longer or even infinitely long does not lessen the need for a grounding cause to explain it; rather, it increases the need for a cause. If a chain with five links in it needs a peg to hang on, then a chain with an infinite number of links would need an even stronger peg outside itself to hang on. Therefore, an infinite regress of current causes of here-and-now existence is impossible.

Another point often overlooked in the question of an infinite regress is that there could not be an infinitely long series of causes of contingent beings because there *could not even be a one-link chain* between the cause of being and the being caused.[545] The very first cause of contingent being could not itself be contingent. No contingent being can cause another being to exist. What does not account for its own existence could not possibly ground the existence of another. How can what is an *effect* with regard to its own existence be a *cause* with regard to another's existence? Whatever is in a state of *potentiality* regarding existence for itself cannot simultaneously be in a state of *actuality* for the existence of another. The only possible ground for what can pass from potentiality to actuality (i.e., a contingent being) with regard to being is what cannot pass from potentiality to actuality (i.e., a necessary Being).

Those things whose being is an effect cannot be causes of being. What receives its existence from another cannot be the cause of another's existence. Only what is actual can actualize; what is in a state of potentiality can be actualized but cannot actualize. But every contingent being is in a state of potentiality regarding being. Therefore, no contingent being can cause being. Only a necessary Being can cause the existence of a contingent being. Therefore, the very first being causing the existence of a contingent being must be a necessary Being.

5. Therefore, a First, Uncaused Cause of My Current Existence Exists.

This conclusion follows logically and necessarily from the above premises. If I undeniably exist and if my nonexistence is possible, then I must have a cause that actualizes my existence. Even though I am not nonexistent, nonetheless, I could be. But the cause of all contingent existence, such as I am, cannot itself be contingent. If it were contingent, then it would not be the *cause* of the contingent; it too would be an *effect*. But it is the cause of the contingent, since the contingent undeniably needs a cause. Hence, the very first cause of my contingent existence is noncontingent; that is, it is a necessary Being. There cannot be any chain of such causes, surely not an infinite chain; the very first cause must be the necessary ground of all contingent existence.

This first cause of all else that exists must itself be uncaused. It cannot be self-caused (which is impossible), and it cannot be caused by another, because it is necessary and a necessary Being cannot be caused by another. Whatever is caused has the potentiality for existence, but a necessary Being is pure actuality without any potentiality. Therefore, a necessary Being cannot be caused. It is literally the not-caused cause of all that is caused. It is the not-affected effecter of all effects. It is the necessary ground of all actualized possibility. There is, then, an uncaused cause of the existence of all that is caused to exist, of which I am one undeniable example.

6. This Uncaused Cause Must Be Infinite, Unchanging, All-Powerful, All-Knowing, and All-Perfect.

We have already seen that a necessary Being must be necessary, pure actuality, changeless, nonspatial, nontemporal, one, simple, infinite, and uncaused. It remains here to see whether that Being must be all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-perfect.

By power we mean what can effect a change in another—that is, what can cause something else to be or not be in some way. But this is precisely what the uncaused cause is—namely, that which is causing the very being of all else that exists. Further, this uncaused cause is infinite in its being. Hence, it has nonlimited causal power in its very being that can effect anything that it is possible to effect. Of course, it does not have power to do what is impossible. The impossible cannot be. For

example, this unlimited cause cannot *not* be. But it has the power to make whatever can come to be to actually come to be.

Further, this infinite cause of all that is must be all-knowing.[546] It must be knowing because knowing beings exist. For example, I am a knowing being, and I know it and can't deny it without affirming it in the very denial. I cannot meaningfully deny that I can know without engaging in an act of knowledge. Total agnosticism is impossible. But whatever I *am*, I have been caused to be. I cause my own *becoming* (this is what freedom is), but only the necessary Being is the cause of my *be-ing*. Hence, the actual ability to know (which I possess) is caused to be by the cause of all finite beings. But a cause can communicate to its effect only what it has to communicate. If the effect actually possesses some characteristic, then this characteristic is properly attributed to its cause. The cause cannot give what it does not have to give. If my mind or ability to know is received, then there must be Mind or Knower who gave it to me. The intellectual does not arise from the nonintellectual; something cannot arise from nothing. The cause of knowing, however, is infinite. Therefore, it must know infinitely. It is also simple, eternal, and unchanging. Hence, whatever it knows—and it knows anything it is possible to know—it must know simply, eternally, and in an unchanging way.

The only thing such a Mind cannot know is what is impossible for it to know. For example, an infinite mind cannot know what it is like to be finite or changing in its knowledge or experience. Since there is no potentiality or finitude in this infinite cause, the one way it cannot be like its effects is that it cannot be finite, potential, and so on. But since what it causes has both potentiality and actuality, the infinite cause is like the effect in its actuality but not like the effect in its finitude. Therefore, whatever implies limitations in the world cannot be attributed to the cause of the world. Likewise, since the cause is pure actuality, whatever potentials it causes in other things must not be attributed to the cause, which has no potentialities in its being. An efficient cause is like the effect only in the actuality it communicates to it.[547] For example, hot eggs are like the hot water in which they boil, but the hardness in the eggs caused by boiling is not in the water that causes it (the water is mobile or soft). Heat communicates heat, but the hot water does not communicate hardness to the egg. Hot water melts other things (e.g., wax). The hardness (or softness) is due not to the actuality communicated by the cause but to the condition or potentiality of the effect to receive causal efficacy.

Likewise, not everything in the creature's knowledge can be attributed to the Creator. Some things are due to the finite and limiting potentials in which the causal power is received. It is for this reason that ignorance and other imperfections found in our knowledge cannot be attributed to the Cause of the world. Only the actual perfections communicated to the effect by its cause can be properly attributed to the cause. A human knows finitely and imperfectly, but the cause of all knowledge knows infinitely and perfectly. There is a similarity in *what* is known but a great difference in the *way* it is known. In brief, if we can know some things, the Creator can know all things. With us some knowledge is possible; with him all knowledge is actual. We *have* knowledge, but he *is* knowledge. The same is true of every actuality we have; we *have* it only by participating in what God *is*.

Finally, God is goodness, but we merely have goodness. Thus the Cause of knowing must be all-knowing, the Cause of goodness must be all-good.[548] Let us define good as that which is desired for its own sake. It is undeniable that some things are desired for their own sake. Persons are an end and not a means; they have intrinsic value and not merely extrinsic value. But what if an end with intrinsic value is desired for its own sake? There are two arguments that we can offer in support of this contention.

First, persons do want to be desired for their own sake. Humans do expect to be treated as ends to be loved, and not as means to be used. The proof of this is not how humans *act* toward others or even

the way they *say* people ought to act toward one another; the proof is the way they *expect* others to act toward them. In order to discover if a person really believes it is good to be just, do not look at the way the person *acts* toward others; rather, look at the way the person *re-acts* when wronged by others. The quickest way to convince an antinomian student that the student really believes in the principle of fairness is for one to give him or her an F on a brilliant term paper *simply* because one does not like the color of the folder in which it was enclosed! The most effective way to find out if a person believes it is wrong to break promises is to break a promise made to that person. Now if there is such a thing as good or that which is desired for its own sake, then it must be caused by the Creator of all goodness. We are only the cause of the *becoming* of good acts via our free choice; the Creator, however, is the cause of the *be-ing* of all goodness.

Second, that there are values or goods desired for their own sake is undeniable.Even the person denying all goods is enjoying the good of being able to express that opinion. There is an implicit good of personhood and freedom manifest in the freedom to deny that there are any such intrinsic goods. How can a person deny his or her value as a person without evidencing that value in the act of making that denial? But the cause of good must be Good, since the cause cannot give what it does not have to give. All actualities actualized in the effect must preexist in the cause. But since the cause of all goodness is infinite, it follows that that cause must be infinitely good, for whatever the infinite Cause "has," that he *is* in the infinity of his being. Since he is simple and has no parts, he cannot be partly anything. Whatever he is, he is that entirely and completely. Therefore, the infinite and necessary Cause of all good must be infinitely and necessarily good. The unchanging Cause of all changing things must be unchangingly good. The Cause of personhood cannot be less than personal himself. He may be much more than is meant by *person* when that term is applied to a finite being, but he cannot be less; he may be (and is) superpersonal, but he is not subpersonal.

7. This Infinitely Perfect Being Is Appropriately Called "God."

By "God" we mean what is worthy of worship—that is, what has ultimate worth-ship. Or, in other words, "God" is the Ultimate who is deserving of an ultimate commitment.[549] "God" is that which has ultimate intrinsic value—what can be desired for his own sake as a person. Anything less than what is ultimately and intrinsically worthy of our admiration and submission is not really "God" but a false god. An ultimate commitment to what is less than ultimate is idolatry. It may be a religious commitment, but it is a commitment to an object that is less than religiously worthy or adequate.

Now if the foregoing arguments are sound, we have good reason to believe that an ultimate value worthy of our worship and our ultimate commitment does indeed exist, for what is infinitely good (and personal), and is the ground and creator of all finite goods and persons, is certainly worthy of worship. Nothing has more intrinsic value than the *ultimate ground and source of all value*. Hence, nothing is more worthy of worship than the infinitely perfect, uncaused cause of all else that exists. Therefore, it is appropriate to call this infinitely perfect cause "God."

8. Therefore, God Exists.

We may conclude, then, that God exists, a theistic God since he is an infinite, personal, all-knowing, all-good, and all-powerful Creator of everything else that exists (of which I undeniably do exist). What in religion is known as the ultimate object of worship or commitment (i.e., God) is by reason known to exist. Hence, what philosophy leads to (via the above argument) is not an abstract, unmoved Mover but a real concrete Ground for our being and a personal Object whom we can love

with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). The God the heart needs is a God the head has good reason to believe really exists.

9. This God Who Exists Is Identical to the God Described in the Christian Scriptures.

The God described in the Bible is said to be eternal (Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:2), changeless (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:18), infinite (1 Kings 8:27; Isa. 66:1), all-loving (John 3:16; 1 John 4:16), and all-powerful (Matt. 19:26; Heb. 1:3).[550] But there cannot be two infinitely perfect, changeless, eternal beings. First, there can be only one infinite and necessary Being, as was shown above. Second, there could not be two beings who have all possible perfections attributable to them. In order for them to be two beings one would have to differ from the other; where there is no difference in being, there is only one being. But there can be no difference unless one being has something the other does not. But if there is something that an infinite being can have but one lacks, then the one lacking it is not absolutely perfect. Hence, there is only one absolutely perfect being. So if there cannot be two such beings, then the God described in the Bible is identical to the God concluded from the above argument.

10. Therefore, the God Described in the Bible Exists.

If there is only one God and the God described in the Bible is identical in characteristics to that God, then it follows logically that the God described in the Bible exists. There cannot be two infinitely perfect beings; there cannot be two such ultimates or absolutes, and so forth. Hence, the God portrayed in Scripture does indeed exist.

This does not mean that everything the Bible *claims* that this God said or did, he actually said or did. Whether what the Bible says about this God is true is another question (see chap. 19). What we may conclude here are two things: first, the God described in the Bible does exist; second, whatever the Bible claims for this God that is not inconsistent with his nature, it is possible that he did indeed do or say.

Therefore, all nontheistic views of god are false. That is, no nontheistic God exists. Deism, finite godism, pantheism, panentheism, polytheism, and atheism (chaps. 9–14) are nontheistic views of God. Therefore, all these views of God are false. Only theism is the true view of God. That is, only a theistic God exists.

An Evaluation of Theism as a Worldview

Theism has been subject to many criticisms. They fall roughly into two classifications: first, those that attempt to disprove theism via some argument for atheism (these were discussed in chap. 14); second, those criticisms that attempt to prove that theism is not true. The latter category may be divided into two groups: those based on a priori–type arguments and those based on a posteriori–type arguments.

Valid Criticisms against Theistic Arguments

Many of the criticisms against theism are valid. Of these the following may be mentioned from the writings of David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and some modern followers.[551]

Strictly a Priori Arguments about God Are Invalid. Nontheists have been correct in observing that there is an invalid move in every purely ontological-type argument. One cannot argue from the mere concept of an absolutely perfect or necessary Being to its existence; Anselm and Descartes tried this but failed. The rational is not the real, and neither is the rationally inescapable the real (see chap. 2), for even if it is logically necessary to *conceive* of a necessary Being as necessarily existing, it does not follow that it necessarily does exist. It might be necessary to *think* that it exists, but this does not prove that it really *does exist*. It is necessary to *think* of triangles with three sides on them; there is no other way to think of triangles. However, it is still possible that no triangles exist. All the nontheist must show is that there is a logical possibility that a necessary Being does not exist.

This point can be readily illustrated from the fact that it is a logical possibility that nothing ever existed, including God. The nonexistence of everything is a logically *conceivable* state of affairs. If a theist objects that the proposition "nothing exists" is unaffirmable without self-destruction, the nontheist may correctly reply that this is true only because one is really beginning with the actual existence of the affirmer. But to argue that something actually exists, and undeniably so (i.e., an affirmer), therefore, it is *unaffirmable* that nothing exists is not the same as arguing from the mere *inconceivability* of the nonexistence of a necessary Being. The necessity is merely conceptual and not actual. And if there is no actual necessity that God exist, then it is conceivable that he does not exist. But in this case the theistic proof fails. Invoking the undeniability that something exists to rescue the argument from collapse really imports a cosmological move from experience and the argument is no longer strictly a priori. It says in effect, I exist, therefore one cannot deny that something necessarily exists. But this is a move from what does exist to a necessary ground or cause for its existence, which is not an a priori argument but an a posteriori–type argument from effect to cause.[552] There is no purely rational a priori way to prove God's existence.

A Posteriori Arguments Are Also Logically Insufficient. Nontheists are correct in observing many of the faults in a posteriori argument. Some will be briefly stated here.

a. *Factual Statements Are Never Logically Necessary.* Critics have pointed out that arguments from fact are never logically compelling, for the opposite of any state of affairs in the world is always logically possible. Certitude is never possible in this type of argument. And any attempt to appeal to a rationally inescapable basis for the argument leaves the a posteriori basis for it and flies in the thin air of pure thought.

b. *Factual Statements Are Not Self-Interpreting*. As we saw earlier (in chap. 5), all facts are interpa-facts. They get their ultimate meaning from the worldview framework by which they are interpreted. For example, facts that many take to imply Intelligent Design in the world, such as irreducible complexity[553] or specified complexity,[554] do not point with necessity to a theistic Designer, as even proponents of the Intelligent Design movement admit. Some take such facts to be the result of the nonintelligent forces of nature. But even if these facts are taken to indicate some kind of design, they do not prove the designer is a theistic God outside the universe. The designer could be a deistic God, a finite god, an extraterrestrial type (as Francis Crick held) or even an immanent, pantheistic or panentheistic Mind inside the universe (as Sir Fred Hoyle believed).[555] No one worldview is definitively identified by this type of argument. Overall worldview positions must be determined by philosophical arguments that speak of the whole universe.

Since the big bang theory refers to the whole universe coming into being out of nothing,[556] it approaches this kind of argument. And since the anthropic principle speaks of the whole universe reflecting design (for the emergence of human life) from the very beginning of the universe category, it too fits into this.[557] But even here many critics believe the argument has left the realm of science and

has gone into metaphysics, for while the anthropic principle begins in the scientific world, it posits a nonscientific Cause beyond the world. Thus it utilizes a metaphysical Cause beyond the physical world. Legitimate as this may be as an origin science, nonetheless, it uses a metaphysical principle of causality that ends in a metaphysical reality—namely, a First Cause of the entire universe.

Be this as it may, the argument from contingency or change (set forth above) is a valid a posteriori argument and is not subject to many of the traditional antitheistic arguments. First of all, it is not based on logical necessity; it admits that reality cannot be established by logical necessity. It acknowledges that it is logically possible (i.e., conceivable) that nothing ever existed, including God. Hence there are no rationally inescapable proofs for the existence of God. The contrary to any state of affairs is always logically possible.

Second, not everything from experience lacks certainty. I am certain that I exist; I cannot deny that I exist without affirming that I exist in that very denial. Hence, it is undeniable (though not logically necessary) that something exists. Even though my nonexistence is not inconceivable, it is unaffirmable. Or, positively put, my nonexistence can be conceived but it cannot be affirmed. I undeniably exist.

Finally, the principle of existential causality is self-evidently true. It may be stated this way: "Everything that has been actualized has an actualizer," or, "Everything that passes from potentiality to actuality does so under the influence of some actuality." Simply stated: "Every effect has a cause." Once one understands that an "effect" is something that is caused and that a "cause" is that which can produce an effect, then the principle of causality is as self-evident as "all wives are married women." One need do no more than examine the nature of the subject and predicate nominative to see that the predicate nominative is reducible to the subject; they are both naming the same thing. With this in mind the basic theistic argument can be summarized as follows:

> Every effect has a cause;
> the world is an effect;
> therefore, the world has a cause.

Unsuccessful Attempts to Invalidate the Argument for Theism

Most traditional arguments of Hume,[558] Kant,[559] and others do not touch the above argument for theism, and other arguments fail as well. Let us examine some of the more important ones.

An Infinite Regress of Causes Is Impossible. As shown above, an infinite regress of current simultaneous causes of what exists here and now is clearly not possible. There may be an infinite series of causes of *becoming* but not an infinite series of causes of here-and-now *being*. As long as there is a dependent being in the universe, there must be something independent on which it depends. If there is an existing effect, something must be effecting or causing it. No effect exists without its cause. If something existed without a cause, then it would not be an effect; it would be self-caused or uncaused. But since I am not self-caused or uncaused, my existence must be effected or caused by a cause. Hence, my existence demands a current here-and-now cause of its continuing *be*-ing. But one never reaches the needed cause by adding up effects; even an infinite number of effects never equals a cause. Hence, no infinite series of effects (which is what a serial "cause" is, since every "cause" in an infinite series is being caused by another) can ever replace the need for a cause of that which is being caused right now (i.e., my existence).

The Principle of Causality Is Justifiable. The principle of existential causality—that every existing effect has a current cause—is justifiable. It is self-evidently true once one understands what

is meant by "cause" and "effect." A "cause" is that which is producing an effect, and an "effect" is that which is being produced by a cause. The real issue is not with seeing the self-evident validity of the principle of causality but with showing that the world is an "effect." The method by which this is accomplished may be described as a metaphysical analysis or unpacking of the nature of a finite, limited, changing being, of which I am undeniably an instance (as we did above). The argument may be summarized this way: My current existence must be either self-caused (which is impossible), uncaused, or caused by another. But it cannot be uncaused, because I am a possible existence—that is, one that exists but might possibly not exist. Whatever is in potentiality to being must have a cause, for the potential is not the actual; no potential can actualize itself any more than the mere potential for a rock to be a building can form it into a building. Potentialities are actualized only by actualizers: things whose capacity has been actualized are caused by another. Hence, whatever exists but might not exist is caused to exist by another. But the world might not exist. Therefore, the world is caused by another; that is, the world is an "effect." In brief, the principle of causality is either self-evident (if stated as "Every effect has a cause") or reducible to the self-evident (if stated as "Every contingent [or finite, changing] being has a cause").

The World as a Whole Needs a Cause. Nontheists sometimes object to the theistic argument on the basis that only parts of the world need a cause but not the world as a whole. They see the theistic argument as the fallacy of composition. Simply because each part of a puzzle is triangular does not mean the whole puzzle is triangularly shaped. But this objection does not apply to the above argument because the *very nature of the parts* demands that the whole world be caused. For example, by the very nature of brown floor tile, a whole floor of them must also be brown.[560] Likewise, by the very nature of a wooden table, if each part is made of wood, then the whole table must be wooden. So it is that by the very nature of effects or caused things, the whole group of them needs a cause just as much as any one of them does. It is possible that the whole world might not exist. The world as a whole is contingent. And whatever is contingent is dependent on a cause beyond it. Hence, there must be a cause beyond the whole world on which it depends.

Sometimes nontheists press this argument a step further. They argue that the whole is more than the parts the way a triangle (△) is more than a three-sided figure (△). All the parts are there in the latter, but it lacks the wholeness of the former. In this sense, they say, the whole universe could be necessary while all the parts are merely contingent on the whole. This move, however, is unsuccessful because it proves to be only a backdoor kind of theism. By admitting that the whole transcends or is more than the parts, and that the whole is both eternal and necessary, and that all the parts depend on it, they have admitted there is a transcendent, eternal, necessary cause on which everything in the universe depends for its existence. But this is what the theist means by God! The nontheist has simply couched his description of God in the phrase "universe as a whole," by which he means the same thing the theist means by "God." On the one hand, if the "universe" is thought of merely as equal to the *sum* total of all the contingent, changing, and finite parts, then there must be a cause beyond it to ground its existence as whole or sum total. If, on the other hand, "universe" means what is eternal, necessary, and *more than* the sum of all the parts, then it is the equivalent of what the theist calls God. But in either case one cannot avoid the conclusion that God exists.

What is more, this objection overlooks the fact that everything that exists besides God (a necessary Being) is a contingent being. This means the whole created universe is contingent. And every contingent being needs a necessary Being as its Cause, as was demonstrated above.

There Is No Four-Term Fallacy in the Theistic Argument. Some nontheists have insisted that the argument for theism equivocates on the term *cause*. They insist that the word *cause* in the premises

means "finite cause" but in the conclusion means "infinite cause."[561] But the meaning of the same term may not be broader or different in the conclusion than in the premises. Therefore, the conclusion of an infinite God is invalidly drawn from the premises of the argument.

However, this objection misses the meaning of *cause* in the premises. *Cause* in the premises simply means "that actuality (whether finite *or* infinite) which produces an effect." In other words, in the premises it is an open question as to whether it is an infinite or a finite cause. But as it turns out, the conclusion demands a not-finite kind of cause which is causing everything else that exists. *Every* finite thing needs a cause; hence, the first cause must be not-finite. If it were finite, then it too would need a cause. But since it does not have a cause, it must be a not-finite (i.e., in-finite) cause of all finite things. Therefore, an infinite cause is possible in the premises but necessitated by the conclusion of the argument. No four-term fallacy has occurred.

The Terms Necessary Being *and* Uncaused Cause *Are Not Meaningless*. Some nontheists insist that the terms *necessary Being*, *uncaused Cause*, and their equivalents have no meaning.[562] Necessity, they claim, cannot be a characteristic of existence; necessity is a logical but not an ontological category. There are several ways to respond to this. First, the theist might claim that God is not a logically necessary Being, but the *statement* "God exists" is a logically necessary statement. In this case, either the nontheists's contention is self-defeating or else it does not really succeed in eliminating the possibility that some logically necessary statements about existence are possible, for either the nontheist's statement is a necessary statement about existence or it is not. If it is a necessary statement about existence to the effect that no necessary statements about existence can be made, then it is self-destructive. However, if it is not a *necessary* statement about existence, then it leaves open the possibility that there might be some necessary statement(s) about existence.

Second, the nontheist's argument confuses two kinds of necessity: logical necessity and ontological necessity. We have already conceded that no reality (God included) is logically necessary. The nontheist has not proved that there is any contradiction regarding the meaningfulness of an *actually* necessary Being. The only way to understand "necessary Being" as contradictory is to view the Being it refers to as self-caused rather than uncaused. Furthermore, if the above theistic argument is valid, then it is undeniably true that not only is the term for an actually necessary ground of the whole contingent meaningful and possible, but such a ground itself is actually necessary, for an actual effect demands an actual cause, and a contingent being demands a necessary Being to ground it. Therefore, it follows that the actual contingent world demands an actually necessary Being as its cause.

Neither are the terms *necessary Being* and *uncaused Cause* purely negative or vacuous concepts, devoid of all positive meaning. There is a negative element in the concept, but it is not entirely negative. God is *not* finite; this is the negative element. But God is a Cause whose essence is pure actuality, knowing, good, and so on; these are all positive attributions. That is, our positive knowledge of the term *God* is provided by the similarity God bears to all perfections in the created being by way of the efficient causal connection. However, since God is a *not*-finite (i.e., infinite) kind of cause, knower, good, and so on, these positive attributes must be affirmed of God in an infinite or unlimited manner. Thus there is both positive content in our understanding of God and a negative removal of all limitation in the affirmations about his essence.[563]

Finally, it is self-defeating to deny any meaning to the term *God*. The proposition "the term *God* is not a meaningful term" is either meaningless (since we do not know what *God* means in the statement) or else self-defeating, because it supposes that we do know what *God* means in the very statement affirming that we do not know what *God* means.[564] Hence, either the nontheist must show that *God* is a contradictory concept such as *square circles*, or else no meaningful statement can be made denying

the possibility that the concept *God* can be meaningful. But if God is conceived as an "un-caused" Being, there is no contradiction in the concept. If there were, then the statement "The universe always existed" (which many nontheists hold in some form) would also be meaningless.

Further, the terms *self-caused*, *caused by another*, and *uncaused* are logically exclusive categories; there are no other possibilities. But it would be contradictory to view God as "caused by another," since God is the *first* cause and first causes have no causes before or behind them. And it is contradictory to view God as "self-caused," for a cause is ontologically prior to its effect, but no being can be ontologically prior to itself. Therefore, the only remaining view (i.e., God is "uncaused") must be noncontradictory, since the categories of self-caused, caused, and uncaused are logically exhaustive of reality, and it is impossible for *all* views about reality to be contradictory (see chap. 1). At least one position about reality must be possible, for the affirmation that no position about reality is possible is self-destructive (since it too is a position about reality). In other words, logic does apply to reality. Any meaningful denial of the law of noncontradiction of reality is itself a noncontradictory statement about reality. But if it is impossible to deny that reality is noncontradictory, then whenever all other logically possible views about reality turn out to be impossible, the only remaining view cannot be logically contradictory. Therefore, God as an uncaused being cannot be a logically contradictory concept.

The Contingency-Necessity and Act-Potency Model Are Not Arbitrary. Sometimes nontheists contend that theists have an arbitrary or a loaded way of speaking of the world that leans in favor of theism.[565] However, this criticism is clearly unfounded. Reality must be viewed in terms of the possible, the impossible, and the necessary; there are no other possibilities. These are logically exhaustive ways to speak of reality, and it is far from arbitrary to speak of reality in logically exhaustive categories, especially since logic is applicable to reality. Likewise, to speak of the world and God as either caused, self-caused, or uncaused is not arbitrary; again, there are no other logical possibilities. Therefore, to base a metaphysical view on what includes all the comprehensive possibilities about reality, and then to eliminate some as actually impossible, establish others as possible and some of these as actual and contingent, and establish the remaining one as actually and necessary, is far from an arbitrary imposition of some so-called loaded model on reality.

The God of Reason Is the Same as the God of Revelation. Some opponents of theistic arguments (see chap. 3) claim the *God of reason* is not the real God or the *God of revelation*. As the church father Tertullian famously asked (see also chap. 3), what has Athens to do with Jerusalem? *What has the God of Aristotle to do with the God of Abraham?* However, this is a false disjunction between reason and revelation. Like two mountain climbers approaching the same peak from different directions, they are both approaching one and the same peak. Since both the God of reason and the God of the Christian revelation are infinite, all-powerful, intelligent beings, and so on, they must be one and the same, for there cannot be two infinite beings of the very same kind, because for there to be two beings they must differ, and two infinite beings are the very same kind of being. Hence, there can be only one such being, regardless of how one comes to know about that being—by reason or by revelation.

The God of Reason Is Religiously Significant. Some critics have argued that the God of reason is not worthy of worship. No one is moved by an Unmoved Mover. No one is caused to worship by concluding there is an Uncaused Cause. Here again, there is a false bifurcation. The God resulting from reason (such as in the cosmological argument given above) is absolutely perfect and good. And as the absolute Good, he has absolute worth. And what has absolute worth is absolutely worthy of worth-ship, which is what worship is—namely, attributing absolute worth to something. Or, to put it

another way, the God of reason shown above is the ultimate Being (uncaused Cause), and what is ultimate is worthy of an ultimate commitment (which is what Paul Tillich called a religious experience). Therefore, the God known via the above cosmological argument is a religiously worthy Being.

The God of Reason Is Existentially and Morally Relevant. Some critics claim that the God of reason is not relevant to our lives. However, if the God described above exists, then he is eminently relevant to our lives, for we would not even exist—right now—if this God did not exist. He is the here-and-now Cause of our existence. As Paul told the Athenians, "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Without God's continued here-and-now causality, we would vanish into oblivion! What could be more existentially relevant than that?

Further, since he is absolutely good, this God is relevant to the way we live. If such a God exists, then it makes an ultimate difference in how we live. Such an ultimately good Being is the ultimate answer to the question, So what? So what one does about this ultimate Being will make an ultimate difference in both the quality and meaning of one's life here and hereafter—eternally.

Summary and Conclusion

We conclude, then, that theism is the only adequate worldview. All other worldviews (chaps. 9–14) are self-defeating or actually unaffirmable. This recognition leads inescapably to the existence of an infinitely perfect and an all-powerful personal Being beyond this world who always has been and is currently the sustaining cause of all finite, changing, and contingent beings. Neither do those other worldviews, as theism does, provide an existentially relevant God. In short, they fail to live up to the standards for a worldview (see chap. 8).

All the major criticisms of theism have been answered in this and the previous chapter. Indeed, most of these criticisms miss the significance of this argument based on existential causality and are directed toward invalid a priori arguments, such as the ontological argument, or toward insufficient a posteriori arguments. Some are based on a rationally unjustifiable form of the principle of sufficient reason. In this sense neither a priori nor a posteriori proofs for God's existence are rationally inescapable.

However, this does not mean that there is no argument that combines both the a priori self-evident principle of existential causality and the undeniable a posteriori fact that something exists (e.g., I exist).[566] The criticisms of this argument for God's existence are unfounded. Thus theism has found a firm ground in existence for the conclusion that God exists. This is a theistic universe. The theistic worldview is true, and all opposing views are not true.

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CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

In part 1 the various types of ways to test the truth of a worldview were discussed. Most of the typical methods were found lacking for the task (chaps. 1–7), including agnosticism, rationalism, fideism, experientialism, evidentialism, pragmatism, and combinationalism (systematic consistency). Another test was set forth that is suited for examining worldviews or metaphysical systems (chap. 8). It is expressed in first principles of being that apply to all of reality.

In part 2 this test was applied to the various competing worldviews of deism, finite godism, pantheism, panentheism, polytheism, and atheism (chaps. 9–14), none of which measured up to the test. Only theism (chap. 15) was found adequate for the task. Thus we concluded that theism is the true worldview, and all other worldviews opposed to it are not true.

In part 3, we will examine how to test truth claims within the theistic worldview, particularly those of Christian theism. We seek a rational and factual answer to whether the central claims of Christianity are true. Since Christianity affirms miraculous support for its claims, we will address the claims of naturalism (chap. 16) against these supernatural claims. Also, since Christianity is a historical religion, claiming deity for a historical person (Jesus of Nazareth), we will examine the claims of historical subjectivism that objectivity in history cannot be achieved (chap. 17). Once these claims are dispelled, the evidence of the historical reliability of the New Testament documents will be scrutinized (chap. 18). Finding them to be reliable, we will proceed to examine the claims for the deity of Christ (chap. 19) and the evidence to support it (chap. 20). Finally, we will turn our attention to what Jesus taught about the divine origin and authoritative nature of the Bible (chap. 21).

The conclusion of part 1 was twofold: first, the only adequate test for the truth of a worldview is the undeniable first principles of being. The positive side of the test of claims about the truth of a worldview is whether the worldview is undeniable in accordance with these first principles. Negatively, then, the only adequate test of the falsity of a worldview is the principle of unaffirmability.

Part 2 followed with a survey of the major worldviews and concluded that only theism is undeniable based on these premises (chap. 15). All other positions are self-defeating or unaffirmable in one way or another (chaps. 9–14).

Now in this final section (part 3) we will argue for the truth of Christian theism vis-à-vis the other possibilities within a theistic universe. That is, there are several types of theism (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, etc.), and we must now discuss how to choose between them within a theistic worldview. Once we have decided *among* the conflicting worldviews, we are faced with a quite different question as to how to decide conflicting truth claims *within* an overall worldview. The answer to this latter question will be found in a different test for truth. Within a worldview or system,

truth must always be decided on the basis of *systematic consistency* (i.e., combinationalism). Whatever explains *most* facts (comprehensiveness), in the *best* fashion (adequacy), in a *noncontradictory* way (consistency), and in a manner that *fits* with the overall system (coherence) will be true.[567]

It is the claim of part 3 in this book that Christianity is the most systematically consistent of the theistic worldviews; that is, Christianity is true. Of course, systematic consistency is not a knockdown argument; its conclusions are not incorrigible. The argument for the truth of Christianity, then, will not be based on undeniability as was the argument for theism. Rather, it will be based on systematic consistency within a worldview as the worldview corresponds completely and consistently with all the relevant facts available. This conclusion, while not undeniable, can provide the basis for moral certitude. This means that while opposite views are possible, in view of the totality of the evidence there is no plausible reason to veto the acceptance of it. While the conclusion of this section is open to both verification and falsification, in view of the evidence there is no good reason to believe the conclusion is false, and there are very good reasons to believe it is true. In legal terms, the truth of Christianity's central claims is beyond reasonable doubt.

16
Naturalism and the Supernatural

A Summary of the Whole Argument for Christianity

This is a good point at which to summarize the argument to this juncture and then project where it is going from here. It can be summarized in twelve points.

1. Truth about reality is knowable (chaps. 1–7).
2. The opposite of true is false (chap. 8).
3. It is true that the theistic God exists (chaps. 9–15).
4. If God exists then miracles are possible (chap. 16a).
5. Miracles can be used to confirm a message from God (chap. 16b).
6. The New Testament is historically reliable (chaps. 17–18).
7. The New Testament says Jesus claimed to be God (chap. 19).
8. Jesus's claim to be God was miraculously confirmed (chap. 20) by
   a. his fulfillment of numerous prophecies about himself;
   b. his sinless and miraculous life;
   c. his prediction and accomplishment of his resurrection.
9. Therefore, Jesus is God (conclusion of chaps. 1–20).
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) teaches is true.
11. Jesus taught that the Bible is the Word of God (chap. 21a).
12. Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God and that anything opposed to it is false (chap. 21b).

It should be observed that points 1–5 are philosophical in nature, and points 6–12 are historical. That is, the first chapters are dealing with the truth of the theistic worldview, but the last chapters treat the truth of a particular theistic view—namely, the Christian worldview. Hence, Christian apologetics comes in two major steps: theism (based on philosophical first principles) and Christian theism (based on historical evidence). This is sometimes called classical apologetics, or two-step apologetics.[568] First, theism is established as the overall worldview framework in which miracles are possible. Second, Christianity is established as the only religion that has credible miracles to establish its central truth claims.

Examination of the Claims of Naturalism over against Supernaturalism

If this is a theistic universe, it follows that miracles are possible, for if there is a God who can perform special acts in the world, then it is possible that there can be special acts of God (i.e.,

miracles). Since we have already established on reasonable grounds that God exists (chap. 15), the possibility of miracles follows naturally. In short, the objections to miracles are really at root objections to the existence of a theistic God. As C. S. Lewis aptly put it, "But if we admit God, must we admit miracles? Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it. That is the bargain."[569]

This fact notwithstanding, the persistent attacks of naturalism and antisupernaturalism must be answered. The discussion that follows is a response to the claims that miracles are impossible in principle and/or in practice or at least highly improbable. This response is necessary for two reasons: first, if the Christian view can be shown to be contradictory, then it cannot be held to be true. Second, the Christian must establish the possibility of miracles, or else the case for the truth of Christianity, based on the unique and confirming miracles of Christ, will fail.

David Hume (1711–76): Miracles Are a Violation of the Laws of Nature

Although Baruch Spinoza generated a systematic attack on miracles a century earlier,[570] the roots of the modern objections to miracles are in the work of David Hume.[571] The first objection of Hume is based on the nature of natural law. According to Hume the laws of nature are based on the highest degree of probability. Even though one cannot be absolutely certain about any matter of fact, nonetheless, if an event occurs over and over again with no known exception, we may have a kind of practical certainty about it. Hume is even willing to use the word "proof" of events in this category. By "proof" he means something known from an experience that is so probable that it leaves no room for doubt, although it is always logically possible that one is wrong about it. With this in mind Hume's argument against miracles may be summarized as follows:

1. A miracle by definition is a violation of (or exception to) a law of nature.
2. But the laws of nature are built upon the highest degree of probability.
3. Hence, a miracle by definition (as an exception) is based on the lowest degree of probability.
4. Now the wise person should always base his belief on the highest degree of probability.
5. Therefore, the wise person should never believe in miracles.

Let us examine Hume's argument in more detail. The first premise could be defended as follows: If a miracle is an event within the purview of natural law, then it is not a miracle but simply an unusual natural happening. Hence, to sustain the claim that miracles are really supernatural, we must view them as exceptions to natural law. If this is what Hume means by "violation," then there is no objection to this premise. However, if "violation" means breaking some inviolable law on which the natural order depends (as Spinoza argued), then the theist would object that "violation" begs the question by defining miracles as impossible.

First, a theist would want to examine more carefully what is meant by "natural law." If, on the one hand, it is meant in the *prescriptive* sense, as a kind of immutable way things *must* operate, then the possibility of miracles is already precluded in the question-begging definition. If, on the other hand, "natural law" is meant only as a *description* of the way things *do* happen, then the theist can readily agree. Second, it does not necessarily follow that an unusual natural event (in the descriptive sense) rules out the possibility of the miraculous. The unusual natural process may be the means by which God performs what as a total event is miraculous. Science may be able to describe the process but not able to explain the total meaning of the product of that process in completely naturalistic terms.

Certainly the theist does not want to contest Hume's second and third premises. A miracle would not even be possible unless there were a regular established pattern of events to which it was the exception. Whatever else is meant by natural law, it is minimal to the definition to understand that a miracle is a highly unusual event. If it happened in a regular and predictable way, then it would no longer qualify as a miracle. Hence, the theist must agree with Hume that by their very nature, natural events must be based on high probability and miracles must be highly exceptional.

Hume's fourth premise is the one with which theists disagree. Why would a wise (critical, thinking) person always base belief on the highest degree of probability based on *past* experience? Even Hume argues that we cannot be sure the sun will rise tomorrow simply because it has always risen in the past. There is no necessary connection between the past and the present, as Hume would be the first to admit.[572] That being the case, there is no logical way that Hume can exclude the possibility of a miracle occurring today as an exception to the universally established pattern of the past. In contradistinction to Hume, we would argue that the wise (critical, thinking) person is the one who judges the truth or falsity of an event on the basis of the available *evidence* for its happening. However great the odds are against something happening, it is always possible that it *will* happen anyway. This is true of both factual and theoretical probability. As nontheists are the first to point out in criticizing the teleological argument, the odds against the universe happening by chance may be great, but it still could have happened by chance. The odds of rolling three dice and getting three sixes are 1 in 216, but a person could get them on the first toss.

Allowing theoretical mathematical probability to outweigh the actual evidence of the present is a very unwise thing to do. The chances of one person being dealt a perfect hand of bridge have been computed at 1 in 635,013,559,600. But a wise person ought not allow those mathematical odds against its happening to take precedence over the testimony of four sane, sober, honest, and intelligent eyewitnesses who saw the perfect hand dealt. In like manner the wise person does not allow antecedent regularity in nature to outweigh consequent evidence for an irregular event. The probability based on the past should never take precedence over the evidence of the present.

By defining a wise person as one who would always take past regularity over the evidence of a violation of that pattern in the present, Hume has in effect set up an invincible naturalism in which he has said that in practice he would never allow an exception to the laws of nature. Hence, on this account, natural law has become practically inviolable. But this begs the whole question, since it assumes miracles will never happen in order to prove that they never occur. Such is the circular nature of a strict naturalism. Without assuming the practical impossibility of belief in miracles, Hume's argument against the possibility of miracles fails.

Another point needs to be made. If Hume is right—that past regularity rules out a belief in a singularity—then Hume is insisting that one not believe in a singular event that has happened. Surely there is something wrong with a theory that insists in advance that one should not accept a fact! This means that Hume (who admitted that if a resurrection did occur, it would be a miracle) would insist that one should not believe Jesus rose from the dead, even if it did occur. Clearly, a theory is rotten at the core when it would deny a fact that has occurred.

What is more, according to Hume's argument against miracles, even things believed by naturalists like himself should not be accepted because they are rare and unrepeated events. For example, astronomers should not accept the big bang theory of the beginning of the universe (which most do) because it has never been repeated. Neither should they accept spontaneous generation of first life (which all naturalistic scientists do), because it is not occurring over and over in the present. Nor, for

that matter, should naturalistic scientists believe in macroevolution, as all of them do, because it has never been repeated. In short, Hume's argument against miracles collapses.

Finally, Hume's argument is not, technically, an argument against the *possibility* of miracles. At best, it is only an argument—a fallacious one at that—against the *believability* of miracles (note the phrase "the wise person should always base his *belief* on"). Even if Hume's argument were valid, it would not eliminate the possibility of miracles. The truth of the matter is that if a theistic God exists, then miracles are possible. And the only way to refute this is to demonstrate that the existence of God is impossible, which most skeptics, agnostics, and even atheists do not even attempt to do. Indeed, a few have attempted it, and none have succeeded.[573] As long as there is a supernatural Cause *of* creation (for which we have offered good reason—see chap. 15), there can be supernatural acts *in* creation. If God can make water out of nothing, then he will have no problem making wine out of water. If he can make life out of nonlife, then he will have no difficulty in putting life in the dead corpse of Jesus of Nazareth (see chap. 20).

Antony Flew (1923–2010): The Unrepeatability of Miracles Shows Their Lack of Credibility

Hume's argument was updated by Antony Flew.[574] Flew's version takes the following form:

1. Miracles are by nature particular and unrepeatable events.
2. Scientific laws by nature describe general and repeatable events.
3. But the evidence for the repeatable and general is always greater than the evidence for particular and unrepeatable events.
4. And the scientific or critical person should never base his belief on the lesser or weaker evidence.
5. Therefore, the critical person should never believe in miracles.

First, technically speaking, Flew's argument, like Hume's, does not rule out the *possibility* of miracles; it simply argues against their *believability*. Miracles are still possible even *if* the evidence for believing in them is weak. Nonetheless, the Christian theist wishes to challenge Flew's contention that the evidence for miracles will always be the weaker evidence.

Next, let us examine other premises. There is no reason why a theist could not accept the truth of the first two premises, for if miracles were not particular and unrepeatable by natural means, then they would not be miracles. Once one can observe, or repeat by natural processes, an event over and over it becomes a general event. And once it is repeatable and general, it is indistinguishable from a natural event. Hence, in order for miracles to maintain distinguishability from natural events they must be particular and unrepeatable by natural processes.

Properly understood, the fourth premise can be accepted by the Christian theist as well. Certainly the Christian too should always accept the position based on the stronger evidence. This is entailed in what systematic consistency means as a test for truth. Consistent with an overall metaphysical framework, the view that best explains the most evidence in a consistent and coherent way is held to be true; the opposing views are believed to be false (see chap. 8).

Christian theism challenges the third premise of Flew's naturalism, which asserts that the evidence for the repeatable and general is always greater than that for the particular and unrepeatable. We may

reply to Flew first by pointing out his unfalsifiable naturalistic assumption. It begs the question to assume in advance of looking at the facts that the evidence will always be greater against miracles than for them. Indeed, Flew of all people should not be making such an unfalsifiable assertion. It was he who put the challenge to theism to allow something that could actually falsify theism as a ground for the meaningfulness of the theistic position. He asked, "What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof . . . [of] the existence of God?"[575] If the believer will not allow anything to count *against* his or her belief in God, charged Flew, then neither may the theist allow anything to count *for* it. Now we can ask Flew the same thing with respect to his unfalsifiable naturalistic presupposition; namely, how can his naturalism be falsified? Indeed, in a later book Flew yielded to the evidence and accepted the existence of God.

Flew entertained the question, and his answer was insufficient. He claimed that his position is falsifiable in principle but not practice. He argued that the possibility of miracles is a matter of evidence and not simply of dogmatism, but that the evidence is always against miracles happening since by nature they are particular and unrepeatable, as opposed to a natural event, which is general and repeatable. The evidence for the latter is always stronger because, Flew argued, it can be tested any time and any place. A miracle, however, cannot be tested in like manner.

Flew added that, even if the evidence for an event contrary to the laws of nature were compelling enough to warrant belief that the event occurred, "that event could now no longer be described as truly miraculous."[576] Now this latter comment, even more so than the former, reveals a seemingly invincible naturalistic bias. The argument implied may be put this way:

1. Whatever happens in the natural world is a natural event.
2. Once an alleged miracle occurs in the natural world, it is a natural event.
3. Hence, once an alleged miracle occurs, it is ipso facto a natural event.

In short, this argument reduces to "everything that happens *in* the natural world is caused *by* the natural world." But this clearly begs the question in favor of metaphysical naturalism; if there are some events caused from *beyond* the world, they will nevertheless have to occur *in* the world in order for us to experience them. Flew's argument means that if one could show convincing evidence that the resurrection of Christ actually occurred in the space-time world, then the naturalist would simply shrug his or her shoulders and say, "Well now we know that resurrections are not miraculous." Whether unfalsifiable in principle or in practice makes no difference; his naturalistic unbelief is invincible. Flew reflects here what R. M. Hare called a "blik" (see also chap. 1, under "Religious Beliefs are Unfalsifiable").[577] No amount of evidence of actual happenings would ever convince him that a miracle has indeed occurred. Whenever what was previously believed to be impossible comes to pass, the naturalist promptly concludes it was not miraculous after all. Why cannot the theist argue similarly that in principle the existence of God can be falsified but in actual practice it cannot? Why cannot the theist insist in like manner that in principle some events may be caused by nature, but that in actual practice once an event occurs in the world (God's world), it is ipso facto a God-caused event? What right does a naturalist have to claim all events are naturally caused any more than a theist has a right to claim that all events are divinely caused (some in a *regular* way and some on *special* occasions)? If one position can beg the question, then the other should have the same privilege. At any rate, Flew's argument is an almost classic case of an unfalsifiable position, which in the process of justification begs the whole question in favor of naturalism.

What is more, like Hume's argument, Flew's would eliminate even other alleged natural events such as the big bang, spontaneous generation, and macroevolution, since they too are unrepeated events. In Flew's attempt to destroy supernatural events, he destroys cherished naturalistic events as well.

Finally, and ironically, Flew has become a refutation of his own argument and evidence that the real problem is whether one believes God exists or not. If God does not exist, then, of course, special acts of God (like miracles) do not exist either. However, once one believes in God, miracles become possible. Hence, once Flew has become persuaded by the evidence that God exists (which he has), suddenly miracles become possible. This is precisely what happened, as recorded in his book *There Is a God*, where he wrote: "It is simply inconceivable that any material matrix or field can generate agents who think and act. . . . A force field does not plan or think. So . . . the world of living, conscious, thinking beings has to originate in a living Source, a Mind."[578] Then as soon as Flew became convinced there was an omnipotent God, he became open to the evidence and allowed conservative New Testament scholar N. T. Wright to write an appendix in which he offered evidence for the reliability of the New Testament and the resurrection of Christ. Indeed, Flew introduced the appendix with these words: "If you're wanting omnipotence to set up a religion, it seems to me that this is the one to beat!"[579] He adds, "Today, I would say the claim concerning the resurrection is more impressive than any by the religious competition."[580] In the appendix, Wright provides evidence for the resurrection, concluding, "The resurrection of Jesus does in fact provide a *sufficient* explanation for the empty tomb and the meetings with Jesus. . . . I think it's also a necessary explanation." Flew responds, "I am very much impressed with Bishop Wright's approach, which is absolutely fresh. . . . This is enormously important. . . . It is absolutely wonderful, absolutely radical, and very powerful. . . . As I said, you cannot limit the possibilities of omnipotence except to produce the logically impossible. Everything else is open to omnipotence."[581] Thus the best refutation of Flew turns out to be Flew himself.

The Descriptive Nature of Natural Law Eliminates Miracles

It made some sense to reject miracles in a "closed" universe such as that of Newton, where natural laws were universal and inviolable. Spinoza wrote, "Nothing . . . comes to pass in nature in contravention to her universal laws, nay . . . she keeps a fixed and immutable order."[582] Well of course nothing can break the unbreakable. However, in the modern, "open" universe, where natural laws are merely a statistical calculation of what does occur, not unbreakable laws of what must happen, the argument against miracles has taken a different turn.

The following argument against miracles from the descriptive nature of scientific law is an example of this point.[583] It can be summarized like this:

1. Scientific laws are merely descriptions of events and not prescriptive norms.
2. But descriptions cannot be violated; they can merely be revised.
3. However, a miracle by nature must be a violation of a law of nature.
4. Therefore, miracles by nature cannot occur (since if they did, they would only be used to revise a natural law).

The Christian theist has no need to disagree with the first premise. Indeed, viewing natural laws as descriptive is both an answer to Hume's first objection and the way to show that miracles are

possible in an "open universe," for a closed system of prescriptive norms presents a much more formidable obstacle to showing that exceptions occur. But if "natural law" is nothing but an open system of human description, based on statistical probability, then a miraculous exception to this is not really violating any immutable law of the universe.

In support of the second premise, the antisupernaturalist urges the following argument. Scientific descriptions are like maps; that is, when they are found to be inaccurate, one does not violate the map but simply revises it. If the landscape is found not to conform to a topographical map, what one does is draw a more accurate map. Nothing has been violated; the description is simply changed to conform to reality. In like manner, the naturalist argues, once a new and unusual event is known to have occurred, we do not scream, "Miracle!" The scientific mind simply finds ways to include this event in a broader, more accurate description of the world in which this event is known to have occurred. Hence, the very descriptive nature of scientific law rules out the miraculous; any exception or inaccuracy in previous laws or "maps" is simply a reason to revise the map to include the so-called miraculous event under the overall natural umbrella.

It is precisely at this point that the theist objects, for this argument too is based on the unjustified presupposition that "whatever happens *in* nature is caused *by* nature."[584] It assumes that all events in the world are natural events. Of course, if this is so then miraculous events in the world are impossible.

Further, there is confusion on the use of the word *violate*. A miracle would "violate" a previous description only in the sense that the law as a general description did not apply in this particular case. For example, if a man were found walking on water this would be a "violation" of the general principle that humans cannot walk on water. Perhaps *violation* is too technical a term and we should speak rather of the general rule and the particular exception, or of the regular and the irregular, or of the usual and the unusual. At any rate, the naturalist makes an unjustified jump from "violation" to the need for "revision." Why revise the topographical map unless change in the landscape can be repeatedly observed? Would the map need revision if a mountain suddenly appeared, was verified, and then disappeared again? Why should a husband revise the belief that his wife loves him because of a single contrary outburst of anger? Revision is necessary only when there is (or can be) a repetition of the observation.

Finally, the truth is that not all exceptions call for revision. Even scientists do not revise their theories because of unexplainable and unrepeated anomalies. If anomalous situations do not demand a new law, then neither do supernatural occurrences. In neither case does one have a natural law to explain the event.

Guy Robinson (1928–2011): The Nature of the Scientific Method Eliminates Miracles

The contemporary scientific naturalist sometimes replies to the above solution with the argument that the scientific method as such eliminates belief in the miraculous.[585] The argument runs like this:

1. Science qua science must assume that all events are naturally explainable.
2. But if all events are scientifically explainable, then no events are supernatural or miraculous.
3. Therefore, science as science eliminates the supernatural.

First of all, it should be granted that *empirical* science as such is limited to natural causes, for empirical science deals with present regularities, and we may properly assume that all regular events have a natural cause, even if they are unusual. For example, contrary to the general pattern of things contracting as they get cooler, water expands at 32 degrees above zero Fahrenheit. However, it does this regularly. So we may rightly posit a natural cause for it.

However, not all science is *empirical* science. Some scientific explorations involve *forensic* science. And unlike empirical science, which is based on observation and repetition of events in the present, forensic science does not have the ability to do this, for it deals with unobserved and unrepeated events (e.g., an unobserved death). In this case, the event was not observed, nor can it be repeated (since we can't ask the dead person to die again so that we can observe it). Thus forensic science does not involve observable and repeated events, so it cannot use tests involving repetition and repeated observation to determine the validity of such events. Hence, the argument from "the scientific method" fails because it wrongly assumes that all legitimate science is empirical in form.

Another way to put our objection to this argument is that it wrongly assumes that all events in the natural world fit into a class of regular events. In short, it denies the legitimacy of scientific exploration of singular events. Again, if science qua science cannot deal with singularities, then it cannot pronounce that a big bang occurred at the beginning of our universe, or that life arose by spontaneous generation, and macroevolution does not occur regularly. The truth is that most naturalistic scientists believe in most or all of these singularities, and they believe there is good evidence for them. Many evolutionists are fond of speaking of macroevolution as a "fact." This being the case, this so-called scientific rejection of singularities such as miracles fails seriously.

Further, it should be noted that no one need give up science in the empirical sense in order to allow room for miracles as singular events, for a regular and a singular event do not fall into the same class. And since it is granted (with naturalistic scientists) that all regular events call for a natural explanation, science is not violated by having another class of events—singular events—that is not properly the subject of empirical science and, hence, must be analyzed by other scientific procedures. For example, forensic science, which does not have regularity or observability of the event, can nonetheless make a scientific analysis of it. This is done all the time in the sciences of astrophysics, archaeology, and paleontology. Hence, the above-stated argument against miracles would also have to disallow these legitimate and recognized sciences.

Since forensic science does not have observability and repeatability as means of testing a scientific view, as empirical science does, it must utilize other scientific principles, of which two are basic: (1) the principle of causality, and (2) the principle of uniformity (analogy). The first one posits that every event (even singularities) has a cause. The second principle states that like effects have like causes. That is, the kinds of cases we observe regularly in the present to produce certain kinds of events should be posited as the cause of similar events in the past. This is precisely how we determine the circumstances of death upon discovery of a dead body. And it is exactly how historical geologists (paleontologists) and archaeologists attempt to reconstruct the past.

To carry the reasoning further, it should be pointed out that these two principles of forensic science make it possible to identify a past event (e.g., a resurrection) as a miracle. For (1) if there is no known natural cause of it (even Hume said a resurrection would be a miracle, if it occurred), and (2) if the only known cause for an event like this that brings life with its specified complexity back into a dead body is an intelligent being, and (3) if it is known that an intelligent Cause of life exists (see chap. 15), then it is reasonable to identify this event as a miracle. More about this later (see chap. 19).

Hence, the argument that admitting miracles brings science to a halt is fallacious. As we have just seen, it certainly does not bring forensic science to a halt; exceptions never bring empirical science to a screeching halt. On the contrary, exceptions (whether they claim to be miraculous or not) are goads to more research. An exception is often the tip that the present law is inadequate. But if scientists cannot find a regular pattern for this anomaly, then they have no right to place it in the class of regular events that have a natural cause. It may or may not be a naturally caused event. But as long as it is not known to be part of a regular pattern, it could have a supernatural cause. Other distinguishing factors known as part of forensic science must be used to determine whether the event was caused by natural or intelligent forces.

Science has always recognized the presence of intelligent causes both for past and present events. Archaeological finds demonstrate intelligent causes in the past; the science of cryptology deals with intelligent causes in the present. One cannot rule out the possibility of an intelligent cause of past events of origin. Rather, the evidence must be examined to determine (via the principles of causality and analogy) which kind of cause is called for. To assume in advance that all past or present causes of all singular events are natural causes is to beg the question in favor of naturalism without looking at the evidence, or in spite of the evidence. This kind of invincible naturalist bias is evident in the following confession of an antisupernaturalist:

> We take the side of [naturalistic] science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs . . . because we have a prior commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a materialistic explanation of the phenomenal world but, on the contrary, that *we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes. . . . Moreover that materialism is absolute for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door.*[586]

However, once we know that the Divine exists (see chap. 15), there is no way to keep the Divine foot out of the room. If a theistic God exists, then miracles are possible, in spite of all the clever arguments by atheists to the contrary.

Finally, even if science could explain *how* part, or even all, of an event occurred, it does not follow that it can explain *why* it occurred or even why it occurred *when* it occurred. Showing that there was a strong wind blowing on the Red Sea does not thereby explain *why* this wind blew precisely *when* it did—namely, in order to enable Israel to escape from Egypt (see Exod. 14). Even if science can reduplicate in a laboratory the means of producing certain events that have happened only rarely in history (say, a virgin birth), it does not follow that the occurrence of such an event in history was not a miraculous event. There is no reason why God cannot use some natural processes in producing a supernatural event.[587] Indeed, in the case of biblical miracles a natural process is often employed as part of the miraculous event. The virgin conception of Christ employed a female ovum but was unusual in that it took place without the implantation of a male sperm. Jesus did not create the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude; he simply multiplied some natural loaves that already existed.

So science has no right to claim an event is natural simply because it can describe the *how*, or the process, by which it occurred. For example, if science discovers how life can be made from nonlife, this will not disqualify the original creation of life as a supernatural event. Rather, it will demonstrate that it takes intelligent intervention, not mere natural forces, to produce it. The fact that scientists can describe how it is done, then (namely, by an intelligent cause), does not negate the nonnatural (intelligent) cause by which it was done; rather, it affirms it.

Alastair McKinnon (1925–): Miracles Are Impossible in the Natural Course of Events

The extent to which the naturalistic bias has penetrated modern thought is very evident in the following argument against miracles:[588]

1. A natural happening is what occurs in the actual course of events.
2. A miracle by definition would be contrary to the actual course of events.
3. But nothing can be contrary to the actual course of events; what is, is.
4. Therefore, miracles cannot occur.

In support of the first premise the naturalist could argue that all natural events must occur in the actual course of events in the natural world. To this the theist need not object. However, the converse of this is not true—namely, that everything that happens in the natural world is ipso facto a natural event. "All events that are natural occur in the natural world" cannot be logically converted into "all events that occur in the natural world are natural events." Again, this would beg the whole question.

Furthermore, the Christian theist would definitely object to the naturalistic understanding of the second premise. A miracle is not "contrary" to the actual course of events in the sense that it cannot happen *within* a natural sequence, but only in the sense that it cannot be explained as a *result* of the natural sequence. Not everything that occurs *in* a natural sequence is a necessary part of that natural order. Human freedom can occur within a natural order without being a necessary part of that order. For example, I can choose to jump out of the way of a speeding car without acting contrary to (or violating) any physical law. Likewise, in the moral realm I may choose *not* to do what comes naturally. I may, for example, choose not to retaliate against one who injures me—a natural reaction—without acting contrary to anything in the actual course of events. In like manner miracles can happen *within* the natural order without being a necessary part *of* that natural order.

Finally, the Christian theist must scrutinize the use of the third premise as well: what is, is. This is a tautology. But in the sense in which the naturalist uses this, it is a naturalistic truism that begs the whole question. The naturalist must mean it in the sense that whatever happens in the actual course of events is ipso facto not a miracle. But if we already know in advance that whenever anything occurs, that is proof positive that it is not a miracle, then it follows that we can forever give up looking for any miracle to occur. Here again, the antisupernaturalist prejudice is *legislating* against the possibility of miracles; it is not *looking* at the evidence for or against an actual event being a miracle. "What is, is; nothing happens *contrary* to the actual course of events." In one sense this is true. But it is also true that a miracle could occur *within* the actual course of events without being a natural event. It may be that one or more of the events in the midst of the ongoing process of history have been supernatural events. That is, they may have been events that occurred *in* nature but were neither caused *by* nature nor *contrary* to nature.

The antisupernaturalist must do more than point to the actual happening and claim its occurrence as proof positive that it is not a miracle. The *actual* is not automatically the *natural*. What actually occurs may be a *supernatural* event, if it has the characteristics of a miracle (see below). What the naturalist must do in order to prove that an actual event is a natural event is to show that the event is naturally connected with antecedent and consequent events. Or, at least the naturalist must show that the event is part of a natural chain of events that are *repeatable* and *predictable*, for unless the event fits into a general and regular pattern on which predictions can be made, the naturalist has no right claiming that it is an event explainable by natural law. Naturalism begs the question in its own favor by claiming that everything that does happen is unquestioned proof that it was not miraculous.

Hume's Other Objections to Miracles

David Hume offered two other objections in regard to miracles.[589] The first is based on the self-canceling nature of conflicting miracle claims, and the second is based on the untrustworthiness of the testimony in favor of a miracle. The first objection may be stated like this:

1. No truth claim can be supported by miracles if any contrary truth claim is also supported by like miracles; contrary truth claims are mutually self-canceling.
2. But all religious systems claim miracles in support of their truth claim.
3. Therefore, no miracles can be used in support of a religious truth claim.

The Christian theist need not object to the first premise. Not only is it true, but later it will be helpful to Christianity. In the final analysis it will serve to eliminate all truth claims based on like "miracles." Contraries are indeed mutually self-canceling when they are each supported by the same kind of "evidence." Equipollence of evidence does lead to skepticism. If these claims are all based on the same kind of evidence, no one of these claims has any more right to truth than the others. This situation can lead to a strong argument in favor of Christianity as follows:

1. All theistic truth claims supported by *like* "miracles" are mutually self-canceling; that is, none of them can lay rightful claim to truth.
2. But Christianity alone is supported by unique miraculous events.
3. Therefore, Christianity alone can lay rightful claim to truth.

It is not our purpose here to support the minor premise; this will be done later (in chaps. 19–20). It is sufficient to point out here that *if* evidence can be provided that Christianity has unique and supporting miracles the like of which are not found in any other theistic system, then Hume's argument does not apply against the Christian truth claims. At least the question of miracles is open to factual verification. Hume's objection is not only unsuccessful but can be turned into a proof for the uniqueness of the Christian truth claim: if other religious claims are supported by like "miracles" of a self-canceling nature and if only Christianity has a unique miraculous support, then only Christianity is verified as true. At least at this point we may conclude that it is *possible* that unique miraculous events are supportive of the truth of Christianity vis-à-vis other positions.

Hume's second argument against miracles is based on the untrustworthy nature of eyewitnesses. It runs like this:

1. No miracle can be established without sufficient evidence in its favor.
2. Sufficient evidence must include a sufficient number of witnesses, with sufficient education and with unquestioned integrity.
3. But there never has been sufficient evidence to support the claim that any miraculous event has occurred.
4. Therefore, no miracle has ever been established.

The merit of this argument is that it is de facto and not de jure; that is, it is open to factual confirmation or disconfirmation. Again, not only is the major premise true, but it is also to the advantage of Christian theism to acknowledge the truth of that premise. Unless there is sufficient

evidence for miraculous truth claims, many conflicting truth claims could be established. But if sufficient evidence is demanded, then it narrows down considerably the claimants to truth.

Our objection is to the second step in the argument. Hume must go in one of two directions in supporting the claim that there never has been "sufficient" evidence. Either he may make the definition of sufficient evidence so narrow that practically nothing historical could be believed—including the existence of Napoleon or maybe even the existence of Hume himself—or else he may make a sensible definition of what "sufficient" evidence would be and thereby open the door for the substantial historical evidence in favor of the eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ (see chap. 20). In any event, Hume's argument does not eliminate the possibility of miracles, which is all we are concerned with at this point.

Some Conclusions about the Natural and the Supernatural

With the preceding discussion in mind, we are now in a position to draw certain conclusions regarding the nature of miracles. First, we will consider the difference between what may be two different kinds of miraculous events.

The Argument against the Identifiability of a Miracle

Antony Flew offered an objection to miracles that calls for a significant response from a Christian theistic position.[590] His argument may be summarized as follows:

1. A miracle must be identifiable before it can be used as evidence.
2. Now there are only two ways to identify (or define) a miracle:
   a. as an unusual event within the natural world, or
   b. as an exception to the natural world.
3. But an unusual event within the natural world is not a miracle; it is simply a rare but natural event.
4. And there is no way from within nature to know that an exception to nature has occurred.
5. Therefore, there is no way to identify (or define) a miracle.
6. But what is unidentifiable has no evidential value.
7. Therefore, no miracle can have any evidential value.

Even granting the first two premises, theists may offer two responses: first, they can challenge premise 3: "But an unusual event within the natural world is not a miracle; it is simply a rare but natural event." This can be done by pointing out that even several areas of science admit that they can detect from signs within nature that there was an intelligent intervention that produced a certain event. (This is true in forensic science, archaeology, cryptology, the SETI program,[591] and the ID movement.[592]) In each of these areas it can be shown that certain events are not produced by purely natural forces, but that some things have an intelligent cause. This invalidates the claim that all these events must have purely natural causes. Of course, this does not ipso facto prove that the cause is a supernatural Being outside the universe. Such a proof requires another argument (see chap. 15), which brings us to the next point.

Second, the theist may argue against premise 4: "And there is no way from within nature to know that an exception to nature has occurred." In response, we note that in one sense this is true, but it does not resolve the issue in favor of naturalism. Even if one cannot recognize a supernatural event from within a purely natural domain, nonetheless, the theist can respond by giving evidence (via theistic arguments like those in chap. 15) that this is not a purely natural universe, for the temporality and contingency of the universe as a whole calls for a supernatural Cause of the whole natural world. Then, what is known about this supernatural Being and the act of a supernatural creation of this world can be used to identify characteristics that certain unusual events in the world have that mark them as being caused by a supernatural Being. This leads us naturally to our next point.

The Distinguishing Earmarks of a Miracle

Given God, what are the earmarks of a special act of God known as a miracle? How can we recognize the hand of God in a natural world? To put it figuratively, is the hand of God recognized by the fingerprints of God? What are these fingerprints or distinguishing characteristics of a supernatural act of God?

It is not enough to define a miracle as an exception to the general pattern of events. This characteristic merely indicates that the event is a nonnatural one; that is, it is not known to come under any scientific law. But there are other possibilities within the category of nonnatural or unusual events: anomalies, magic, alien beings, demonic activity, and even providential activity, for example. The characteristics of a true miracle are unusualness, immediateness, purposefulness, and moral goodness.

Unusualness. The minimal characteristic of a miracle is that it is an unusual event. That is, it must be an exception to the normal pattern of events. This is to attract attention to it. It fits with one of the biblical words for a miracle—namely, *wonder* (Gk. *teras*). Of course, while every miracle is unusual, not every unusual event is a miracle. So unusualness is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition, for a miracle. More is needed. The word *wonder* is almost always used of a miracle in the New Testament in connection with the word *sign*, to indicate that it means more than just an unusual event; it means one that has a meaning or purpose beyond just being unusual.

Immediateness. True miracles occur immediately. Natural processes take time. For example, what nature does over time in turning rainwater into wine from the grapes, Jesus is said to have done immediately. If he did, then this would be a miracle. Likewise, wheat planted in the ground will over time produce more wheat. But making wheat (bread) into more wheat instantaneously (as the Bible says Jesus did—John 6) would be a miracle.

It is interesting in this connection how many times the Bible stresses the immediateness of the miracles it records. Matthew 8:3: "Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And *immediately* his leprosy was cleansed." Matthew 8:13: "And to the centurion, Jesus said, 'Go; let it be done for you as you have believed.' And the servant was healed at *that very moment*." Acts 3:6–7: "Peter said, '. . . In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk!' And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and *immediately* his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and began to walk" (see also Matt. 9:22; Mark 1:31, 42; John 5:9).[593]

No gradual miracles are recorded in the Bible. There is one two-stage miracle (Mark 8:22–25), of which both events were immediate and only extending over a few minutes total. Since only God can immediately make something out of nothing (the original creation act—2 Cor. 4:6), this power is

reserved to him alone. Hence, biblical miracles are often described as a "power" (Gk. *dunamis*), in this case, the power of God (see Matt. 22:29; 1 Cor. 12:10; Phil. 3:10).

Even some unbelievers who deny miracles acknowledge this characteristic of a miracle. Charles Darwin, for example, admitted, "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory [of gradual change] would absolutely break down."[594] Why? Because instantaneous appearances of new forms of life would be an indication that they were created.

Purposefulness. True miracles have a purpose. They are not done to entertain (cf. Luke 23:8), or willy-nilly, but "according to his [God's] will" (Heb. 2:4). They fit into the context in which they occur. The overall purpose of a biblical miracle was to glorify the God who alone can cause it (not the agent through whom it was done).

Most often, however, biblical miracles are used as a "sign" (Gk. *sēmeion*) to confirm a sermon, a message, a new revelation from God. Hebrews declares: "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was *attested to us* by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (2:3–4). John declared that the purpose of Jesus's miracles recorded in the Gospel of John was to confirm that he was the Son of God: "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30–31). Jesus said, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home" (Mark 2:10–11).

Since miracles come from a superintelligent and superpowerful being, it is understandable that they would have a supernatural purpose. Such a God would not scatter them like pepper from a pepper shaker.

Moral Goodness. Since a true miracle is an act of a theistic God, and God is a morally perfect Being, it follows that miracles cannot be associated with moral evil.[595] God is good, and miracles bring with them not evil but good, such as healing (John 9) or raising from the dead (John 11). Other unusual events can be amoral (such as anomalies or magic) but never immoral, like demonic signs (see below).

How to Distinguish True Miracles from Other Unusual Events

With these distinguishing characteristics of a miracle in mind, we are now in a position to distinguish a true miracle from other unusual events.

Miracles vs. Anomalies. An anomaly is also an unusual event in the sense that there is no *known* natural explanation for it. But there is where the similarities end. Anomalies have no divine purpose and no truth claims connected to them. So an anomaly is a-theological (has no theological truth claim connected to it) and a-teleological (has no divine purpose associated with it, such as confirming a new revelation from God).

Miracles vs. Magic. What is commonly known as "magic," but is really only trickery, is not miraculous at all. It is simply built on natural laws (such as "the hand is quicker than the eye") that can be repeated and predicted. That is, magic is under the control of a human. Then too, magic as such does not bring glory to God or moral good to humanity. Neither does magic have theological meaning. A magic trick is amoral and nontheological by nature. Magic brings glory not to God but to the

magician who performs it. It is human-centered and not God-centered. There is nothing supernatural or anomalous about magic tricks; all the laws involved are natural and knowable. Of course, what is known as "black magic" is, for the Christian, another matter. It is not trickery by natural physical laws; rather, it involves evil spiritual forces that go beyond the normal happenings in the physical world. But ordinary magic is simply a natural phenomenon that is explainable or repeatable by natural means.

Miracles vs. Satanic Signs. Further, a miracle is different from a satanic sign. Granting the possibility of evil spiritual powers in the universe working in opposition to God, whatever intervention they may be able to make in the natural world would be in accord with their purposes. Hence, satanic signs would, by their very nature, have the following characteristics: (1) They would not be associated with the truth about God but with error; they would not be used to confirm truth but to confirm error. (2) Satanic signs would not bring about moral good, but evil; they would not stimulate conduct in accord with God's will but in opposition to it. (3) Finally, satanic signs would not help to fulfill God's purposes but would work to destroy them; they would not glorify God but would magnify evil men or the evil spirits behind them.

Whether true miracles have ever occurred is not under consideration in this chapter. It is the subject of another chapter (chap. 20). Reason can show that miracles are possible; only history can reveal whether they are actual. But before we can get there, we need to establish whether history is even knowable (chap. 17) and whether we have any historically reliable documents that provide a credible report of miracles (chap. 18). If history is knowable and we do have such documents, then we can examine them for evidence that the events recorded are truly miracles (chap. 20). Before we do this, we have one more topic to discuss.

The Possibility of Miracles Confirming a Message from God

Miracles in Judaism. Historic Judaism is a theistic religion, and it records that miracles were used to confirm Moses as a prophet of God. We have an example in the call of Moses:

> Then Moses answered, "But behold, they will not believe me or listen to my voice, for they will say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.' " The LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A staff." And he [God] said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent. . . . "If they will not believe you," God said, "or listen to the first sign, they may believe the latter sign." (Exod. 4:1–3, 8)

Miracles were also used to confirm Moses's leadership in view of Korah's rebellion:

> And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me. . . . If the Lord creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD. . . . And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up. . . . So they and all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol." (Num. 16:5; 28–30, 32–33)

Miracles were also used to confirm that Elijah was a prophet of God when he was challenged by the prophets of Baal. After their pagan prayers failed to bring fire from heaven on the sacrifice, Elijah prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant. . . . Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (1 Kings 18:36–38).

Miracles in Christianity. After Jesus turned water into wine, Nicodemus came and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do

unless God is with him" (John 3:2). When the Jewish leaders asked Jesus for a miraculous sign, he responded: "No sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39–40).

To prove he was the Messiah, Jesus offered miracles, such as curing the incurable (Mark 2:10–11). Likewise, Peter said Jesus was accredited by miracles when he declared: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). And the writer of Hebrews declared that God confirmed the message of Christ by signs and wonders (Heb. 2:3–4).

Paul defended his apostleship by miracles, saying: "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Cor. 12:12). John also declared that miracles confirm Jesus is the Christ [Messiah] (John 20:30–31).

Miracles in Islam. Islam is the third great monotheistic religion. It too has miracle claims. Muhammad said, "If they reject thee, So were rejected apostles Before thee, who came with clear Signs" (Sura 3:184).

The Qur'an also says, "Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron, with Our signs and authority manifest" (Sura 23:45). It records Moses saying of his miracles, "Thou knowest well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening Evidence" (Sura 17:102).

Muhammad held that God gave Jesus the power to do miracles, even to raise the dead: "O Jesus, the son of Mary . . . I strengthened thee with the holy spirit. . . . By me leave [permission], and thou healest those born blind; the lepers, by my leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by my leave" (Sura 5:113).

So all three great theistic religions believe that (1) a theistic God rationally communicates to rational beings; (2) this theistic God can perform miracles; and (3) those miracles can confirm a truth claim made in God's name.

Miracles in Nontheistic Religion. It is clear that miracles can occur in theistic religions, but what about miracle claims in nontheistic religions (which abound). Three points need to be made in response.

First, true miracles are not possible in nontheistic religions. Only if there is a supernatural Being beyond this world who can intervene in it can there be a true miracle. So all miracle claims in the nontheistic world are bogus. They simply can't occur.

Second, miracles in nontheistic religions are inconsistent with those religions' own beliefs. Buddhism is a nontheistic religion with miracle claims, but this is inconsistent with their one belief that there is no theistic God, and such a God alone can perform them. Further, as C. S. Lewis observed, "But what could be more absurd than that he [Buddha] who came to teach us that Nature is an illusion from which we must escape should occupy himself in producing effects on the Natural level—that he who comes to wake us from a nightmare should add to the nightmare? The more we respect his teaching the less we could accept his miracles."[596]

Third, as in other nontheistic religions (like Hinduism), miracle claims are late, legendary, and without multiple eyewitness testimony such as we have for many miracles of Jesus. So there are no good grounds for accepting these accounts as authentic.

Likewise, Roman polytheistic stories about Apollonius were legends. Claims about Apollonius of Tyana (d. AD 98) having miraculous powers to support his claim to be the Son of God are legendary stories without foundation for many reasons:[597] (1) The biography by Philostratus is the only source

of the life of Apollonius, and it ends with his death, not resurrection (as Jesus's biographies do). (2) There is nothing supernatural in the Apollonius biography, either as to claims of deity or miracles done to prove such a claim. (3) The postdeath miracle stories are not part of his biography. They are simply called "stories" [legends] by his biographer Philostratus. (4) Damis, the alleged source for these stories, is most likely a nonexistent person used as a literary device. (5) The style of writing used by Philostratus was a popular literary form of the day called "romance" or "romance fiction." It is not to be taken as literally or historically true. (6) Philostratus was not an eyewitness but was commissioned to compose his book by Julia Domna, wife of the Roman emperor Septimus, some 120 years after Apollonius's death. (7) A possible motive for the publication of Philostratus's work was a desire to counteract the growing influence of Jesus. (8) The miracle stories about Apollonius are contradictory. Some say he died in Ephesus, others in Lindus or Crete, and all say that he then appeared later. In any event, they do not compare favorably with the New Testament, in which multiple contemporary accounts attest that over five hundred witnesses claimed to see the resurrected Christ on twelve different occasions over a protracted, forty-day period (see chap. 19).

In like manner, miracle claims in Hinduism are mere legends. For example, one form of Hinduism, called Hare Krishna, claims that Krishna was a supernatural incarnation of God. However, (1) Krishna did not claim to be an incarnation of the true theistic God (see chap. 15)—but of a false, pantheistic God (see chap. 11); (2) there are no contemporary accounts, let alone multiple accounts, of miracles performed by Krishna to support any such claim; (3) there were no specific and multiple long-range prophecies that he fulfilled, as there are in some biblical stories; (4) Krishna did not live a sinless life, as the earliest contemporary records say Jesus did; (5) Krishna did not predict and accomplish his physical resurrection from the dead, as Jesus did. Here too the miracle claims fall far short of those in the New Testament. Again, the truth is that miracle claims can (and do) exist in nontheistic religions, but miracles cannot exist in these religions since they have no supernatural God, who alone can supernaturally intervene in the natural world.

Miracles can occur only in a theistic universe. But if God exists, then miracles are possible (above). Miracles have certain unique and identifiable characteristics so that if one occurred, we could recognize it (above). Given this, we can ask: Can they be used to confirm a message from God? There are several reasons to believe the answer is affirmative.

Miracles according to Some Nonbelievers

Miracles are expected within a theistic context, but what is interesting is that even some noted nonbelievers admit that miracles could be used as a divine confirmation. For example, David Hume affirmed that a resurrection of a corpse would be a miracle. He wrote, "It is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country."[598]

Hume also allowed that a series of unusual events occurring on the command of an individual would count as miracles: "Thus if a person, claiming a divine authority, should command a sick person to be well, a healthful man to fall down dead, the clouds to pour rain, the winds to blow, in short, should order many natural events, which immediately follow upon his command; these might justly be esteemed miracles, because they are really, in this case, contrary to the laws of nature."[599]

Hume even implied that superior miracles would prove one religion over another: "Every miracle, therefore, pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions (and all of them abound in miracles) . . . so has it the same force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every other system. In

destroying a rival system, it likewise destroys the credit of those miracles on which that system was established."[600]

When Bertrand Russell was asked, "What kind of evidence could convince you God exists?" he responded: "I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then proceeded to happen, then I might perhaps be convinced at least of the existence of some superhuman intelligence. I can imagine other evidence of the same sort which might convince me, but as far as I know, no such evidence exists."[601]

As mentioned earlier, even Charles Darwin admitted that instant appearance of complex organisms would be supernatural: "If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory [of gradual change] would absolutely break down."[602]

The Logic of Miracles as a Divine Confirmation

The logical connection between a miracle and a truth claim supports the claims in the main theistic religions. It goes like this:

1. If a theistic God exists, then miracles are possible.
2. A miracle is a special act of a theistic God.
3. A theistic God is all-knowing (omniscient).
4. A theistic God is also a morally perfect Being.
5. An all-knowing, all-perfect God cannot err or deceive.
6. Hence, a theistic God would not act to confirm something as true that was false.
7. Therefore, true miracles in connection with a message confirm that message to be from God: (a) the miracle confirms the message, (b) the sign confirms the sermon, (c) an act of God confirms the Word of God, and (d) new revelation needs new confirmation.

Pinchas Lapide's (1922–97) Acknowledgment of Resurrection

Jewish scholar Pinchas Lapide even goes so far as to admit that the resurrection of Christ was a miracle: "In regard to the future resurrection of the dead, I am a Pharisee. Concerning the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, I was for decades a Sadducee. I am no longer a Sadducee since the following deliberation has caused me to think this through anew. . . . If God's power which was active in Elisha is great enough to resuscitate even a dead person . . . , then the bodily resurrection of a crucified Jew also would not be inconceivable."[603]

This poses a serious problem, however, for Judaism, as is revealed in a letter to the editor of *Time* magazine: "Pinchas Lapide's logic escapes me. He believes it is a possibility that Jesus was resurrected by God. At the same time he does not accept Jesus as the Messiah. But Jesus said he was the Messiah. Why would God resurrect a liar?"[604] More about this later (in chap. 19).

The Probability of Miracles in a Theistic World

Philosophy can show that miracles are *possible*, but only history shows that they are *actual*. While this is true, it is also true that by philosophy (good reasoning) it can be shown that miracles are *probable* in a theistic world. We have not developed this point here, but an argument from the very nature of a theistic God can be made that follows this logic: (1) a theistic God by his very nature can communicate with his rational creatures made in his image; (2) given the nature of a personal God who made personal beings like himself, it is likely (probable) that such a God would want to communicate with those beings; (3) the most effective way to communicate with them would be to confirm his messages as divine communication by miracles, thereby providing evidence of the messages' divine origin; (4) therefore, it is probable that a theistic God would perform miracles—even before we look at history to see whether he has done so.

Summary and Conclusion

The arguments against miracles beg the question. They presuppose either that miracles are impossible in principle or in practice or that they are at least improbable. Rather than *looking* at the evidence for or against miracles, they end up *legislating* in advance the impossibility of the miraculous. They say in effect: "Whatever happens in the natural world is a natural event." But some things that happen *in* the natural world may have a supernatural origin. If there is a God who can act (i.e., a theistic God), then acts of God (i.e., miracles) are automatically possible.

There is, of course, the problem of identifying a miracle. Here, however, the theist may argue that even within nature some events can be identified as having nonnatural, intelligent causes. And within the metaphysical framework of theism, there is no reason such events cannot be caused by a supernatural Cause (God). The "fingerprint" of God can be seen in the characteristic marks of a miracle, which distinguish it from other unusual events. However, whether a miracle has ever occurred cannot be settled by *philosophy* alone; that is a matter of *history*. It can be shown philosophically that miracles are possible (maybe even probable), but whether miracles have actually happened can be known only experientially and historically. It is to the experiential and historical pinpoint that we will turn our attention in the next chapters.

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17
Objectivism and History

Christianity is a historical religion. It makes historical claims about miraculous events that allegedly confirm its truth claims. In order to verify these truth claims one must first establish the objectivity of history. This leads naturally into a discussion of whether there is such a thing as an objective historical fact—that is, whether history is really knowable. It is necessary to examine the postmodern and relativistic arguments against the objectivity of history and respond to them in order to see whether miracles can be part of history.

Postmodern Objections to the Objectivity of History

Several arguments have been advanced against the position that history is objectively knowable, particularly from a postmodern perspective.[605] If these arguments are valid, it makes verification of Christianity via a historical method impossible. This topic is of vital importance to Christian apologetics. Let's consider the objections and offer a response to them in defense of having an objective view of history.

The Problem of Indirect Access to the Events

The subjectivists argue that the subject of history, unlike that of science, is not directly observable. The historian does not deal with past events but merely with *statements* about past events. It is this fact that enables the historian to deal with facts in an imaginative way. Historical facts, the subjectivists insist, exist only within the creative mind of the historian. The documents do not contain facts but are, without the historian's understanding, mere ink lines on paper. Further, once the event is gone it can never be fully re-created. Hence, historians must impose meaning on their fragmentary and secondhand record. "The event itself, the facts, do not say anything, do not impose any meaning. It is the historian who speaks, who imposes a meaning."[606]

Two reasons are offered as to why the historian has only indirect access to the past. First, it is claimed that, unlike a scientist's world, the historian's world is composed of records and not events. This is why the historian must contribute a "reconstructed picture" of the past. In this sense the past is really a product of the present.

Second, the historical subjectivists assert that scientists can test their views whereas historians cannot. Experimentation is not possible with historical events. Scientists have the advantage of repeatability; they may subject their views to falsification. Historians cannot. The unobservable historical event is no longer verifiable; it is part of the forever-departed past. Hence, what one believes about the past will be no more than a reflection of one's own imagination. It will be a subjective construction in the minds of present historians and cannot hope to be an objective representation of what really happened.

A Response to the Problem of Indirect Access to Historical Events

The most fundamental response to the historical subjectivists is to point out that whatever is meant by the "objective" knowledge of history that they deny must be possible, since they imply they have it in their very denial. How could they know that everyone's knowledge of history was not objective unless they had an objective knowledge of it by which they could determine these other views were not objective? One cannot know not-that without knowing that. In short, the denial of historical objectivity implies an objective knowledge of history.

Further, if by "objective knowledge" the subjectivists mean absolute knowledge, then of course no human historian can be objective. If an "objective" presentation means an *accurate and adequate*[607] one that reasonable people should accept, then the door is open to the possibility of objectivity.

Assuming this latter sense, one can argue that history can be just as objective as some sciences.[608] For example, paleontology (historical geology) is considered an objective science. It deals with physical facts and processes of the past. However, the events represented by the fossil finds are no more directly accessible to the scientists or *repeatable* than are historical events to the historian.

True, there are some differences. The fossil is a mechanically true imprint of the original event, and eyewitnesses of history may be less precise in their reports. But the historian may rejoin by pointing out that the natural processes that mar the fossil imprint parallel the personal filtering of events through the testimony of eyewitnesses. At least it may be argued that if one can determine the integrity and reliability of an eyewitness, one cannot slam the door on the possibility of objectivity in history any more than on objectivity in geology.

Scientists might contend that they can repeat the processes of the past by present experimentation, whereas historians cannot. But even here the situations are similar, for in this sense history too can be "repeated." Similar patterns of events, by which comparisons can be made, recur today as they occurred in the past. Limited social experiments can be performed to see if human history "repeats," and widespread "experiments" can be observed naturally in the differing conditions in the ongoing history of the world. In short, the historian, no less than the scientist, has the tools for determining what really happened in the past. The lack of direct access to the original facts or events does not hinder the one more than the other.

Some have suggested that there is another crucial difference between history and science of past events. They insist that scientific facts "speak for themselves" but that historical facts do not. However, even here the analogy is close, for several reasons.

First, if "fact" means the original event, then neither geology nor history is in possession of any facts. "Fact" must be taken by both to mean information about the original event, and in this latter sense facts do not exist merely subjectively in the mind of the historian. Facts are objective data, whether anyone reads them or not.

What one does with data—that is, what meaning or interpretation one gives to them—can in no way eliminate the data. There remains for both science and history a hard core of objective facts. The door is thereby left open for objectivity in both fields. In this way one may draw a valid distinction between propaganda and history: the former lacks sufficient basis in objective fact, but the latter does not. Indeed, without objective facts no protest can be raised either against poor history or propaganda.

If history is entirely in the mind of the beholder, there is no reason one cannot decide to behold it any way one desires. In this case there would be no difference between good history and trashy

propaganda. But historians, even historical subjectivists, recognize the difference. Hence, even they assume an objective knowledge of history.

The Problem of the Fragmentary Nature of the Accounts

The second objection to the objectivity of history relates to its fragmentary nature. At best a historian can hope only for completeness of documentation, but completeness of the events themselves is never possible. Documents at best cover only a small fraction of the events themselves.[609] From only fragmentary documents one cannot validly draw full and final conclusions.

Furthermore, the documents do not present the events but only an interpretation of the events mediated through the one who recorded them. At best we have only a fragmentary record of what someone else thought happened, so "what really happened would still have to be reconstructed in the mind of the historian."[610] Because the documents are so fragmentary and the events so distant, objectivity becomes a will-o'-the-wisp for the historian. Not only does the historian have too few pieces of the puzzle; also the partial pictures on those few pieces are not the original, but were formed by the mind of the one who passed the pieces down to us.

A Response to the Problem of the Fragmentary Nature of the Accounts

The fact that accounts of history are fragmentary does not destroy history's objectivity any more than fragmentary fossil remains destroy the objectivity of geology. The fossil remains represent only a tiny percentage of the living beings of the past. This does not hinder scientists from attempting to reconstruct an objective picture of what really happened in geological history. Likewise, the history of humanity is transmitted to us by only a partial record. Scientists sometimes reconstruct a whole human on the basis of only partial skeletal remains—even single jaw bones. While this procedure is perhaps rightly suspect, nonetheless one does not need every bone in order to fill in the probable picture of the whole animal. As with a puzzle, as long as one has the key pieces, one can reconstruct the rest with a reasonable degree of probability. Of course, the reconstruction of both science and history is subject to revision. Subsequent finds may provide new facts that call for new interpretations. But at least there is an objective basis in fact for the meaning attributed to the find. Interpretations can neither create the facts nor ignore them, if they wish to approach objectivity. We may conclude, then, that history need be no less objective than geology simply because it depends on fragmentary accounts. Scientific knowledge is also partial and depends on assumptions and an overall framework that may prove inadequate on the discovery of more facts.

Whatever difficulty there may be, from a strictly scientific point of view, in filling in the gaps between the facts, once one has assumed a philosophical stance toward the world, the problem of objectivity in general is resolved. If there is a God (chap. 15), then the overall picture is already drawn; the facts of history will merely fill in the details of its meaning. If this is a theistic universe, then the artist's sketch is already known in advance; the detail and coloring will come only as all the facts of history are fit into the overall sketch known to be true from the theistic framework. In this sense, historical objectivity is most certainly possible within a given framework such as a theistic worldview. Objectivity resides in the view that best fits the facts into the overall system—that is, in systematic consistency.

The Problem of the Selection of the Material

A further problem is posed for an objective knowledge of the past. It is noted that historians make selections from only some of these fragmentary reports and build their interpretations of past events on their selections. There are volumes in archives that most historians do not even touch.[611] Furthermore, the actual selection among the fragmentary accounts is influenced by many subjective and relative factors, including personal prejudice, availability of materials, knowledge of the languages, personal beliefs, social conditions, and so on. Hence, historians themselves are inextricably involved with the history they write. What is included and what is excluded in their interpretations will always be a matter of subjective choice. No matter how objective historians may attempt to be, it is practically impossible for them to present what really happened. Their "history" is no more than their own interpretation based on their own subjective selection of fragmentary interpretations of past and unrepeatable events.

A Response to the Problem of the Selection of the Material

The fact that historians must select their materials does not automatically make history purely subjective. Jurors make judgments "beyond reasonable doubt" without having all the evidence. If the historian has the relevant and crucial evidence, it will be sufficient to attain objectivity. One need not know everything in order to know something. No forensic scientist knows all the facts, and yet objectivity is claimed for the discipline of forensic science. As long as no important fact is overlooked, there is no reason to eliminate the possibility of objectivity in history any more than in science. The question is not whether some facts are omitted but whether the facts included are representative of what actually happened.

The selection of facts can be objective to the degree that the facts are selected and reconstructed in the context in which the events represented actually occurred. Since it is impossible for any historian to pack into an account everything available on a subject, it is important to select the points that are representative of the relevant period.[612] Condensation does not necessarily imply distortion. The mini can be an objective summary of the maxi.

There remains, however, the question whether the real context and connections of past events are known (or are knowable). Unless there is an accepted framework or structure for the facts, there is no way to reconstruct in miniature what really happened. The objective meaning of historical events depends on knowing the connections that the events really had when they occurred. But the events are subject to various combinations depending on the structure given to them by the historian, the relative importance placed on them, and whether prior events are considered causal or merely antecedent. Hence, there is really no way to know the original connections without assuming an overall hypothesis or worldview by which the events are interpreted. Of course, objectivity of bare facts and mere sequence of antecedent and consequent facts are knowable without assuming a worldview. But objectivity of the *meaning* of these events is not possible apart from a meaningful structure such as that provided by an overall hypothesis or worldview. Hence, the problem of objective meaning of history, like the problem of objective meaning in science, depends on one's *Weltanschauung* (world and life view). Objective meaning is system-dependent. Only within a given system can the objective meaning of events be understood. Once that system is known, it is possible by fair and representative selection to reconstruct an objective picture of the past.

The Problem of the Need for Arranging the Facts of History

Once the historian takes the available fragmentary documents, which must be viewed indirectly through the interpretation of the original source, and selects a certain amount of material from the available archives, and begins to provide an interpretive structure to it by the use of the historian's own value-laden language, the historian not only understands it from the relative vantage point of his or her own generation, but must also select and arrange the topic of history in accordance with his or her own subjective preferences. In short, the dice are loaded against objectivity before the writing even begins.

The final written product will be prejudiced by what is included in and what is excluded from the material. It will lack objectivity by how it is arranged and by the emphasis given to it in the overall presentation. The selection made in terms of the framework given will either be narrow or broad, clear or confused. Whatever its nature, the framework is necessarily a reflection of the mind of the historian.[613] This moves one still further away from objectively knowing what really happened. Hence, an objective view is not possible.

A Response to the Problem of the Need for Arranging the Facts of History

There is no reason why the historian cannot rearrange without distorting the past.[614] The reconstruction does not necessitate revision; one may select material without neglecting significant matters. Every historian must arrange material. The important thing is whether it is arranged or rearranged in accordance with the original arrangement of events as they really occurred. Any historian who incorporates consistently and comprehensively all the significant events in accordance with an overall and established worldview has not sacrificed objectivity. Arranging the facts in accordance with the way things really were is being objective. It is neglecting important facts and twisting facts that distorts objectivity.

The historian may desire to be selective in the compass of the study, for example, to study only the political, economic, or religious dimensions of a specific period. But such specialization does not demand total subjectivity. One can focus without losing the overall context in which one operates. It is one thing to focus on specifics within an overall field but quite another to totally ignore or deliberately neglect or distort the overall context of that in which one is most interested. As long as the specialist stays in touch with reality rather than reflecting the pure subjectivity of fancy, there is no reason why a measurable degree of objectivity cannot be maintained.

Of course, once the properly selected and appropriately arranged facts are placed in an overarching framework and assigned an ultimate meaning, the question of which worldview should be used arises. This leads us to our next point.

The Problem of the Need for a Worldview to Interpret the Facts

All historians interpret the past within the overall framework of their own world and life views. And there are three different philosophies of history within which historians operate: the chaotic, the cyclical, and the linear views of history.[615] Which one of these the historian adopts is a matter of faith or philosophy and not a matter of mere fact. Unless one view or another is used, no ultimate interpretation is possible. One's worldview will determine whether one sees the events of the world as a meaningless maze, as a series of endless repetitions, or as moving in a purposeful way toward a

goal. These worldviews are both necessary and inevitably value oriented. So, it is argued, without one of these worldviews the historian cannot interpret the events of the past, but through a worldview objectivity in history becomes impossible.

A worldview is not generated purely from the facts. Facts do not speak for themselves. Every fact is an interpra-fact. So-called bare facts bear no meaning. There are no mere data without interpretation. The facts gain their meaning only within the overall context of the worldview. Without the structure of the worldview framework the "stuff" of history has no meaning. Augustine, for example, viewed history as a great theodicy, but Hegel saw it as an unfolding of the Divine Being. No archaeological or factual find as such can provide the meaning for an objective meaning of history. Without some viewpoint there would be no framework in which to interpret specific events. And the historical relativists insist that once one admits there are different ways to interpret the same facts, depending on worldview, one has thereby given up all right to claim objectivity. If there are several different ways to interpret the same facts, depending on the overall perspective one takes, then there is no single objective interpretation of history.

A Response to the Problem of the Need for a Worldview to Interpret the Facts

Those who argue against the objectivity of history apart from an overall worldview must be granted this point, for without a worldview it makes no sense to talk about objective meaning.[616] Meaning is system-dependent. Within a given system a given set of facts has a given meaning, but within another system it may have a very different meaning. Without a context meaning cannot be determined, and the overall context is provided by the worldview and not by the bare facts themselves.

Even so, this does not make the choice of a worldview arbitrary. As was established earlier, there are undeniable first principles of knowledge that apply to all of reality (see chap. 8). And these principles can be used to establish a theistic worldview as opposed to all other worldviews (see chap. 15). And once this overall theistic worldview is established, it follows that objectivity is possible. It is possible because in a theistic universe each fact has an objective meaning; each fact is a theistic-fact. These principles provide not only the ultimate meaning for *what* is happening but also for *why* it is occurring. All events in a theistic world bear a divine meaning; they all fit into the overall context of God's ultimate purpose. Hence, once one can determine what the facts are and can assign them a meaning in the overall context of the theistic universe by showing that they fit most consistently with a given interpretation, one may claim to have arrived at the objective truth about history.

For example, granted that this is a theistic universe, it can be argued that the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth returned miraculously from the grave in confirmation of the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Son of God (see chap. 19). If this unusual event has the distinctive marks of a supernatural event (see chap. 16), then the Christian can argue that the event is a miracle that confirms the associated truth claims of Christ. But apart from this theistic framework it is not even meaningful to make such a claim.

Overarching hypotheses are necessary to determine the ultimate meaning of events, and a theistic hypothesis is essential to claim that any historical event is a miracle. To use contemporary language, a worldview is a metanarrative—a concept postmodernists reject. However, they have nowhere to stand to do so. A worldview metanarrative cannot be rejected without having an overarching framework from which to do so.

One cannot move the world epistemologically without a firm place for a fulcrum. In short, there is no way to reject metaphysics without making metaphysical statements of one's own. Merely uttering nonmetaphysical poetic protest, which some postmodernists claim to be doing, will not suffice. Either they are making metaphysical statements about reality to deny such statements can be made (which is self-defeating) or they are not. And if they are not, then they have no grounds on which to deny metaphysical reality exists. And, as we showed earlier (chap. 8), certain basic first principles about reality are undeniable, including that I exist and that a theistic God exists (chap. 15). Furthermore, postmodernists themselves gain credibility for their view only by implying metaphysical statements about reality in the very denial of the same. As C. S. Lewis keenly observed in another context (which is nonetheless applicable here; see also chap. 1 under "Reply to Postmodernists"), those who attempt to avoid the self-defeating nature of their view by insisting that they "do not claim to know any truths, ought they not to have warned us rather earlier of the fact? For really from all the books they have written . . . one would have got the idea that they were claiming to give a true account of things. The fact surely is that they nearly always are claiming to do so. The claim is surrendered only when the question discussed . . . is pressed; and when the crisis is over the claim is tacitly resumed."[617]

The Problem of the Unavoidability of Value Judgments

To borrow the words of W. H. Dray, the very subject matter of history is "value-charged."[618] The facts of history consist of murders, oppression, and so forth that cannot be described in morally neutral words. By the use of ordinary language the historian is forced to make value judgments. Further, because history deals with flesh-and-blood humans with motives and purposes, an analysis of history must of necessity comment on these. Whether, for instance, one is called a "dictator" or a "benevolent ruler" is a value judgment. How could one describe Hitler without making some value judgments? And if one were to attempt a kind of scientifically neutral description of past events without any stated or implied interpretation of human purposes, it would not be history but mere raw-boned chronicle without historical meaning.

Having admitted what cannot be avoided—namely, that one must make some value judgments about past events—a historian's account has lost objectivity. In short, there is no way for historians to keep themselves out of their histories. They cannot be other than they are, and they are persons with perspectives and prejudices expressed in value languages by which and through which they view the world. In this sense objectivity is unattainable. All writers will inevitably evaluate things from their own subjective perspectives and by their own choices of words.

A Response to the Problem of the Unavoidability of Value Judgments

It may be granted that ordinary language is value laden and that value judgments are inevitable. This by no means makes historical objectivity impossible.[619] To be objective means to be fair in dealing with the facts. It means to present *what* happened as correctly as possible. Further, objectivity means that when one interprets *why* these events occurred, one's language should ascribe to them the value they really had in their original context. Granting that within an established worldview certain things have a given value, an objective account of history must reconstruct and restructure these events with the same relative value. In this way objectivity demands value judgments rather than avoids them. The question to ask is not whether value language can be objective, but *which* value statements objectively portray the events the way they really were. Once this has been determined,

value judgments are not undesirable or merely subjective; they are also essential and objectively demanded.

The Problem of the Historical Conditioning of the Writer of History

Besides the conscious use of philosophical frameworks, historians are subject to unconscious programming that makes them products of their times. It is impossible, so it is thought, for historians to stand back and view history objectively because they too are part of the historical process. Hence, historical synthesis depends on the personality of the writer as well as the social and religious milieu in which the writer lives.[620] In this sense one must study the historian in order to understand the history.

Since the historian is part of the historical process, it is said, objectivity can never be attained. The history of one generation will be rewritten by the next, and so on. No historian can transcend historical relativity and view the world process from the outside.[621] At best there can be successive, less than final historical interpretations, each viewing history from the vantage point of its own generation of historians. Therefore, there is no such person as a neutral historian; each remains a child of his or her own day.

A Response to the Problem of the Historical Conditioning of the Writer of History

It is undoubtedly true that all historians are products of their times. Each person occupies a relative place in the changing events of the spaciotemporal world. However, it does not follow that because *historians* are products of their times, their *histories* are also products of the time. All mathematicians and logicians are also products of their times, but it does not mean they make no objective statements. Simply because a *person* cannot avoid a relative place in history does not mean that the person's *perspective* cannot attain some meaningful degree of objectivity. The criticism confuses the *content* of knowledge and the *process* of attaining it.[622] It confuses the *formation* of a view with its *verification*. Where one derives a hypothesis is not essentially related to how one can establish its truth.

Many great scientific inventions came from unusual sources. For example, Nikola Tesla invented the AC motor after seeing a vision of it in his mind. And Friedrich August Kekule invented the model for the Benzene molecule after seeing a vision of a snake biting its tail. The *source* of an idea is not necessarily related to its *adequacy* in describing reality.[623]

Further, if relativity is unavoidable, the position of historical relativists is self-refuting. Either their view is historically conditioned and, therefore, not objective, or else it is not relative but objective. If the latter, then it thereby admits that it is possible to be objective in viewing history. On the contrary, if the position of historical relativism is itself relative, then it cannot be taken as objectively true. It is simply subjective opinion that has no basis to claim to be objectively true about all of history. In short, if it is a subjective opinion, it cannot eliminate the possibility that history is objectively knowable, and if it is an objective fact about history, then objective facts can be known about history. In the first case objectivity is not eliminated, and in the second, relativity is self-defeated. Hence, in either case, objectivity is possible. Indeed, historical relativism is self-destructive.

What is more, the constant rewriting of history is based on the assumption that objectivity is possible. Why strive for accuracy unless it is believed that the revision is more objectively correct

than the previous view? Why critically analyze unless improvement toward a more accurate view is the assumed goal? Perfect objectivity may be practically unattainable within the limited resources of the historian on most if not all topics. But be this as it may, the inability to attain 100 percent objectivity is a long way from total relativity. Reaching a degree of objectivity that is subject to criticism and revision is a more realistic conclusion than the conclusion of the relativist's arguments. In short, there is no reason to eliminate the possibility of a sufficient degree of historical objectivity.

All objections to objectivity in value judgments can be resolved by appeal to the firmly established theistic worldview that is the basis for all ultimate objectivity of meaning. If there is an ultimate Mind, then there can be ultimate meaning, for the meaning God gives to a fact is what that fact ultimately means. And how and to what degree we can understand that meaning will depend on God's revelation to us about it. Historically, Christian thinkers have pointed to two such revelations of God: general and special. The first is God's revelation of himself through nature (see chap. 15), and the second is through Scripture (see chap. 21).

The Problem of the Religious Bias of the Historian

Another objection, raised especially by those opposed to the New Testament, is that history recorded by persons with religious motives cannot be trusted. Their religious passion is said to obscure their historical objectivity. They tend to reinterpret history in the light of their religious beliefs.

A similar criticism is at the basis of traditional form criticism and redaction criticism, by which the New Testament writers are said to be *creating* or re-creating the words of Jesus rather than strictly *reporting* them. That is, the Gospels as we now have them reflect the religious experience of the later Christian church rather than the pure words of Jesus. In this case, we cannot know what was actually said or done by the original New Testament figures, including Jesus. If so, this would destroy the historical basis for orthodox Christianity.

A Response to the Problem of the Religious Bias of the Historian

This objection against the possibility of having an objective view of the original events is without grounds, for several reasons.

First, there is no logical connection between one's purpose and the accuracy of the history one writes. People with no religious motives can write bad history, and people with religious motives can write good history.

Second, other important writers from the ancient world wrote with motives similar to those of the Gospel authors. Plutarch, for example, declared: "My design was not to write histories, but lives."[624] Yet historians do not deny all objectivity in Plutarch's writings.

Third, complete religious propaganda literature such as some critics attribute to the New Testament was actually unknown in the ancient world. Noted historian A. N. Sherwin-White declared: "We are not acquainted with this type of writing in ancient historiography."[625]

Fourth, unlike other ancient accounts, the Gospels were written at a maximum of only decades after the events. Many other secular writings, such as those of Livy and Plutarch, were written centuries after the events they record.

Fifth, as shown below, the historical confirmation of NT writings is overwhelming (see chap. 18). The argument that the religious purpose of NT authors destroyed their ability to write good history is

simply contrary to the facts.

Sixth, the NT writers take great care to distinguish their words from the words of Jesus, as any red-letter edition of the Bible clearly indicates (see also John 2:20–22; 1 Cor. 7:10, 12; 11:24–25; Acts 20:35). This reveals their honest attempt to separate what Jesus actually said from their own thoughts and feelings on the matter.

Seventh, in spite of the religious purpose of Luke's Gospel (Luke 1:4; cf. Acts 1:1), he states a clear interest in historical accuracy, and his accuracy has been overwhelmingly corroborated by archaeology.

> Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as *they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses* and servants of the word. [Therefore,] *since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.* (Luke 1:1–4 NIV; emphasis added)

Eighth, the existence of religious bias is no guarantee of historical inaccuracy. One can recognize one's own bias and avoid its crippling effects. If this were not so, then even persons with nonreligious (or antireligious) biases could not write accurate history either. Yet many claim to be able to do so.

Ninth, the New Testament writers used the same basic criteria used in other ancient writings. Thus this criticism either misses the mark or else destroys all ancient histories.

Tenth, if the historicity of an event must be denied because of the strong motivation of the person giving it, then virtually all eyewitness testimony from survivors of the Holocaust must be discounted. But this is absurd, since they provide the best evidence of all. Likewise, a physician's passion to save a patient's life does not negate the physician's ability to make an objective diagnosis of the disease. In like manner an author's religious motives do not nullify the author's ability to record accurate history.

The Problem of Hermeneutical Subjectivity in Interpreting History

Perhaps the most radical form of historical relativism is postmodern deconstructionism, by which history is treated as literature. One of the foremost proponents of this view is Hayden White. In his book *Metahistory*, White claims that history is poetry. He claims that no history can be written without bringing the material into a "coordinated whole" under some "unifying concept." And he believes these concepts are chosen from poetry: "I have identified four different archetypal plot structures by which historians can figure historical processes in their narratives as stories of a particular kind: Romance, Tragedy, Comedy, and Satire." No one of these is better than the others or correct as opposed to incorrect; they are simply different. This scheme of structures, he says, has permitted him "to view the various debates over how history ought to be written . . . as essentially matters of stylistic variation within a single universe of discourse."[626]

A Response to the Problem of Hermeneutical Subjectivity in Interpreting History

The hermeneutical objection fails to show that all history is relativistic, for several basic reasons. The foremost is the self-defeating nature of the charge: the relativity objection presupposes some objective knowledge. A careful look at the arguments of relativists reveals in at least two ways that they presuppose some objective knowledge about history. First of all, they speak of the need to select

and arrange the "facts" of history. But if the facts are really "facts," then they represent some objective knowledge in themselves. After all, it is one thing to argue about the *interpretation* of the facts but quite another to deny that there are any facts of history to argue about. For example, it is understandable that one's worldview framework will color how one understands the fact that Jesus of Nazareth died on a cross in the early first century. But it is quite another to deny this is a historical fact.

Second, that relativists believe one's worldview can distort the facts implies that there is a correct way to view them. Otherwise, how would one know that some views are distorted? That some views are incorrect implies that there is a correct view. This leads to the next point.

Third, total relativity (whether historical, philosophical, or moral) is self-defeating. How could one know that history was completely unknowable unless one knew something about it? How could one know all historical knowledge was subjective without some objective knowledge about it? In truth, total relativists must stand on the pinnacle of their own absolute in order to relativize everything else. The claim that all history is subjective turns out to be an objective claim about history. Thus total historical relativism cuts its own throat.

The Problem of the Difference between Religious and Secular History

Granting that history can be known objectively, there still remains the problem of the subjectivity of religious history. Some writers make a strong distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*.[627] The former is empirical and objectively knowable to some degree, but the latter is spiritual and unknowable in a historical or objective way. As spiritual history or superhistory, it cannot be verified in any objective way. Spiritual history has no necessary connection with the spaciotemporal continuum of empirical events. It is a "myth" with subjective religious significance to the believer but with no objective grounding. Like the story of George Washington and the cherry tree, *Geschichte* is a story made up of events that probably never happened but that inspire people to do some moral or religious good.

If this distinction is applied to the New Testament, then even granted that the life and central teachings of Jesus of Nazareth can be objectively established, there is no historical way to confirm the miraculous dimensions of the New Testament. Miracles do not happen as part of *Historie* and therefore are not subject to objective analysis; they are *Geschichte* events and as such cannot be analyzed by historical methodology. Many contemporary theologians have accepted this distinction.

Paul Tillich claimed that it is "a disastrous distortion of the meaning of faith to identify it with the belief in the historical validity of the Biblical stories."[628] He believed with Søren Kierkegaard that whether all the events surrounding Jesus of Nazareth really occurred is irrelevant to faith. The important thing about a "myth" or "miracle" is not whether it happened in history but whether it evokes an appropriate religious response. With this Rudolf Bultmann and Shubert Ogden would also concur, along with much of contemporary theological thought.

Even those who, like Karl Jaspers, have opposed Bultmann's more radical demythologization view have accepted, nevertheless, the distinction between the spiritual and empirical dimensions of miracles.[629] On the more conservative end of those maintaining this distinction is Ian Ramsey. According to Ramsey even C. H. Dodd[630] must admit that "it is not enough to think of the facts of the Bible as 'brute historical facts' to which the Evangelists give distinctive 'interpretation.'" For Ramsey the Bible is historical only if "'history' refers to situations as odd as those which are referred to by that paradigm of the Fourth Gospel: 'the Word became flesh.'" Ramsey concludes, "No attempt

to make the language of the Bible conform to a precise straight-forward public language—whether that language be scientific or historical—has ever succeeded." More positively, the Bible is about situations "to which existentialists refer when they speak of something being 'authentic' or 'existential-historical.'"[631] There is always something "more" than the empirical in every religious or miraculous situation. The purely empirical situation is "odd" and thereby evocative of a discernment that calls for a commitment of religious significance.[632]

A Response to the Problem of Religious and Secular History

First, the Christian apologist does not want to contend that miracles are a mere product of the historical process. The supernatural occurs *in* the historical, but it is not a product *of* the natural process. What makes it miraculous is that the natural process alone does not account for it; there must be an injection from the realm of the supernatural into the natural, or else there is no miracle. In accordance with the objectivity of history just discussed, there is no good reason why the Christian should yield to the radical existential theologians on the question of the objective and historical dimensions of miracles. Miracles may not be *of* the natural historical process, but they do occur *in* it. Even Karl Barth made a similar distinction when he wrote, "The resurrection of Christ, or his second coming . . . is not a historical event; the historians may reassure themselves . . . that our concern *here* is with the event which, though it is the only real happening *in* is not a real happening *of* history."[633]

Second, unlike many existential theologians, we must also preserve the historical context in which a miracle occurs, for without it there is no way to verify the objectivity of the miraculous. Miracles do have a historical dimension without which no objectivity of religious history is possible. And as was argued above, historical methodology can identify this objectivity (just as surely as scientific objectivity can be established) within an accepted framework of a theistic world. In short, miracles may be *more* than historical, but they cannot be *less* than historical. It is only if miracles do have historical dimensions that they are both objectively meaningful and apologetically valuable.

Third, a miracle can be identified within an empirical or historical context both directly and indirectly, both objectively and subjectively. A miracle possesses several characteristics. It is an event that is both scientifically unusual and theologically and morally relevant (see chap. 16). The first characteristic is knowable in a directly empirical way; the last two are knowable only indirectly through the empirical, in that the event is unusual and even "evocative" of something "more" than the mere empirical data of the event. For example, a virgin birth is scientifically unusual, but in the case of Christ it is represented as a "sign" that was used to draw attention to him as something "more" than human. The theological and moral characteristics of a miracle are not empirically objective. In this sense they are experienced subjectively. This does not mean, however, that there is no objective basis for the moral dimensions of a miracle. If this is a theistic universe, then morality is objectively grounded in God. Hence, the nature and will of God are the objective grounds by which one can test whether the event is subjectively evocative of what is objectively in accord with the nature and will of God. The same thing applies to the truth dimensions of a miracle. They are subjectively evocative of a response to an associated truth claim. However, the truth claim must be in accord with what is already known of God; otherwise one should not believe the event is a miracle. It is axiomatic that acts of a theistic God would not be used to confirm what is not the truth of God.

To sum up, miracles happen *in* history but are not completely *of* history. Miracles, nonetheless, are historically grounded. They are *more* than historical but are not *less* than historical. There are both empirical and superempirical dimensions to supernatural events. The former are knowable in an

objective way, and the latter have a subjective appeal to the believer. But even here there is an objective ground in the known truth and goodness of God by which the believer can judge whether the empirically odd situations that call for a response are really acts of this true and good God.

The Objection of Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) against Miracle-History

On the basis of Troeltsch's principle of analogy, some historians have come to object to the possibility of ever establishing a miracle on testimony about the past. Troeltsch stated the problem this way:

> On the analogy of the events known to us we seek by conjecture and sympathetic understanding to explain and reconstruct the past. . . . Since we discern the same process of phenomena in operation in the past as in the present, and [we] see, there as here, the various historical cycles of human life influencing and intersecting one another. . . . Without uniformity we could know nothing about the past, for without an analogy from the present we could know nothing about the past.[634]

In accord with the Troeltsch principle, some have argued that "no amount of testimony is ever permitted to establish as past reality a thing that cannot be found in present reality. . . . In every other case the witness may have a perfect character—all that goes for nothing."[635] In other words, unless one can identify miracles in the present, one has no experience on which to base an understanding of alleged miracles in the past. The historian, like the scientist, must adopt a methodological skepticism toward alleged events in the past for which the historian has no parallel in the present. The present is the foundation of our knowledge of the past. As F. H. Bradley put it,

> We have seen that history rests in the last resort upon an inference from our experience, a judgment based upon our own present state of things . . . ; when we are asked to affirm the existence in past time of events, the effects of causes which confessedly are without analogy in the world in which we live, and which we know—we are at a loss for any answer but this, that . . . we are asked to build a house without a foundation. . . . And how can we attempt this without contradicting ourselves?[636]

A Response to the Objection of Troeltsch against Miracle-History

Troeltsch's principle of analogy turns out to be similar to Hume's invalid objection to miracles built on the uniformity of nature (see chap. 16). Hume insisted that no testimony about alleged miracles should be accepted if it contradicts the uniform testimony of nature. In like manner Troeltsch would reject any particular event in the past for which there is no analogue in this uniform experience of the present. There are several reasons for rejecting Troeltsch's argument from analogy.

First, it begs the question in favor of a naturalistic interpretation of *all* historical events. It is a methodological exclusion of the possibility of accepting the miraculous in history. The testimony for regularity in *general* is in no way a testimony against an unusual event in *particular*. The cases are different and should not be evaluated in the same way. Empirical generalizations (e.g., "humans do not rise from the dead") should not be used as countertestimony to good eyewitness accounts that in a particular case someone did rise from the dead. The historical evidence for any particular historical event must be assessed on its own merits, completely aside from the generalizations about other events. Rather than being based on the valid scientific principle of uniformity (analogy), Troeltsch's objection is based on an invalid scientific presupposition called uniformitarianism.

Second, the Troeltsch argument proves too much. As Richard Whately convincingly argued, on this uniformitarian assumption not only miracles would be excluded but so would many unusual events of the past, including those surrounding Napoleon Bonaparte.[637] No one can deny that the probability against Napoleon's successes was great. His prodigious army was destroyed in Russia; yet in a few

months he led another great army in Germany, which likewise was ruined at Leipzig. However, the French supplied him with yet another army sufficient to make a formidable stand in France. This was repeated five times until at last he was confined to an island. There is no doubt that the particular events of his career were highly improbable. But there is no reason on these grounds that we should doubt the historicity of the Napoleonic adventures. History, contrary to scientific hypothesis, does not depend on the universal and repeatable. Rather, it stands on the sufficiency of good testimony for particular and unrepeatable events. Were this not so, nothing could be learned from history.

Further, it is clearly a mistake to import uniformitarian methods from *empirical scientific* experimentation into historical research. Repeatability and generality are needed to establish an empirically based scientific law or general patterns (to which miracles would be particular exceptions). But this method does not work at all in history. Historiography works more like a *forensic science* (see chap. 16), which can deal with singular events that are unrepeated in the present. Indeed, it functions like some astronomical views, such as the big bang or biological views like the spontaneous generation of first life.

What is needed to establish historical events is credible testimony that these particular events did indeed occur. So it is with miracles. It is an unjustifiable mistake in historical methodology to assume that no unusual and particular event can be believed, no matter how great the evidence for it. Troeltsch's principle of analogy would destroy genuine historical thinking. The honest historian must be open to the possibility of unique and particular events of the past whether they are miraculous or not. The historian must not exclude a priori the possibility of establishing events like the resurrection of Christ without a careful examination of the testimony and evidence concerning them.

Finally, as was established earlier, if God exists (see chap. 15) then miracles are possible (see chap. 16). And if miracles are possible, then no theory about the past can rule them out. One cannot *legislate* against an event occurring; one must rather *listen* to the evidence as to whether it has actually happened.

The Problem of Extraordinary Events and Extraordinary Evidence

A related objection to miracle-history is that extraordinary events demand extraordinary evidence. For example, even if one's neighbor was known to be generally trustworthy, we would have great difficulty in accepting her story that her cat gave birth to a poodle. Even if she was one of the most trustworthy persons one knew, one would surely want to have extraordinary evidence before accepting this extraordinary event. Likewise if one's neighbor claimed his wife had conceived a son without the involvement of a male sperm or that his dead and buried son had come back from the grave! Why then should one accept the reports of the New Testament when they record events such as these?

A Response to the Problem of Extraordinary Events and Extraordinary Evidence

First, if "extraordinary" evidence means *miraculous*, then this objection begs the question, for it sends one on an infinite regress to find the miraculous evidence for the miracle and the miraculous evidence for that miraculous evidence, and so on.

Second, if it means *more than usual*, then we have more than usual evidence in the New Testament for the miracles of Christ, particularly for the resurrection. As will be shown later (in chap. 20), we

have more documents—earlier documents, better-copied documents, based on more early events and more reliable reports from the ancient world—than we have for any book in the ancient world. So, if we cannot trust the reliability of the New Testament, then we have to reject all of ancient history.

Third, scientists accept other extraordinary events without extraordinary evidence. For example, the big bang origin of the universe is an extraordinary event. It occurred only once and has never been repeated since. Yet most astrophysicists accept it. One skeptical astronomer, Robert Jastrow, said, "Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world . . . ; the chain of events leading to man commence suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy."[638] He added elsewhere, "That there are what I or anyone would call super-natural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact."[639]

The same is true of the almost universally accepted belief among naturalistic scientists regarding the spontaneous origin of first life. Since the time of Redi and Pasteur, no science teacher or informed science student would accept a report of the most trustworthy neighbor that life had spontaneously appeared in a pantry—or anywhere else for that matter. Even some scientists refer to it as a near "miracle,"[640] and yet they all accept that it did happen. But when we ask for the evidence, they cannot provide it—let alone provide extraordinary evidence.

A Defense of the Objectivity of History

Some General Conclusions from the Above Discussion

First, we may concede to the historical relativist that absolute objectivity is indeed possible only for an infinite Mind. We may add that finite minds must be content with establishing an overall worldview on the basis of undeniable first principles and then use systematic consistency within that worldview. That is, we may come to a fair but revisable conclusion based on an attempt to reconstruct the past within an established framework of reference that comprehensively and consistently incorporates all the facts into the overall sketch provided by the frame of reference.

Second, in this acceptable sense of *objectivity* the historian's understanding of the past can be as objective as the scientist's. Neither geologists nor historians have direct access to or complete data on repeatable events. Further, both must use value judgments in selecting and structuring the partial material available to them.

Third, in reality, neither the scientist nor the historian can attain objective meaning without the use of some worldview by which to understand the facts. Bare facts cannot be known apart from some interpretive framework. Hence, the need for structure or a meaning-framework is crucial to the question of objectivity. On the one hand, unless one can settle the question as to whether this is a theistic or nontheistic world on grounds independent of the mere facts themselves, there is no way to determine the objective meaning of history. If, on the other hand, there are good reasons to believe that this is a theistic universe (as we argued in chap. 15), then objectivity in history is a possibility. Once the overall viewpoint is established, it is simply a matter of finding the view of history that is most consistent with that overall system. That is, systematic consistency is the test for objectivity in historical matters as well as in scientific matters.

Arguments in Favor of the Objectivity of History

There are many reasons for believing that objectivity in history is possible. The most fundamental one is that total historical relativity is self-defeating. Let's take a look at the arguments. Together they make a formidable case for the possibility of having an objective history.

First, if God exists, then objective meaning is possible. If there is an absolute Mind (Meaner), then there is absolute meaning. To deny that this is possible one must prove that the existence of God is impossible, but all known attempts to do this have failed. As long as the existence of God is possible, the existence of absolute meaning is possible. And to the degree to which one establishes the existence of God (see chap. 15), one thereby establishes the credibility of the belief in objective meaning.

Second, it is self-defeating to deny objectivity in history. Even Charles Beard, the apostle of historical relativity himself, wrote: "Contemporary criticism shows that the apostle of relativity is destined to be destroyed by the child of his own brain," for "if all historical conceptions are merely relative to passing events . . . then the conception of relativity is itself relative." In short, "*the apostle of relativity will surely be executed by his own logic.*"[641] Of course, some might claim that historical knowledge is not totally relative but only partially so. To this the objectivists note two things. For one thing, this is an admission that history, at least some history, is objectively knowable. Thus this more moderate principle of relativity cannot claim to have eliminated in principle the possibility that the Christian claims are historically knowable. Further, since the central truths of Christians are more amply supported by historical evidence than almost any other event from the ancient world, this principle is also an admission that a partial relativity view does not eliminate the historical verifiability of Christianity. In brief, total historical relativism is self-defeating, and partial historical relativism admits that the historical claims of the Christian faith are verifiable.

Third, even some historical relativists attempt to do objective history themselves. For example, Beard attempted to write his own "scientific work" on the "essence of history."[642] Further, Beard believed his own understanding of the Constitution "was objective and factual."[643]

Fourth, another overlooked point is that the ability to detect bad history is itself a tacit admission that objectivity is possible. Nagel pointed out that "the very fact that biased thinking may be detected and its sources investigated shows that the case of objective explanations in history is not necessarily hopeless."[644] In other words, that one can know that some histories are better than others reveals that there can be some objective understanding of the events by which this judgment is made.

Fifth, historians employ normal objective standards. Like science, history employs normal inductive measures that render the facts knowable. As W. H. Walsh observed, "Historical conclusions must be backed by evidence just as scientific conclusions must."[645] Thus, Beard adds, "The historian . . . sees the doctrine of relativity crumble in the cold light of historical knowledge."[646] Even Karl Manheim, whom historian Patrick Gardiner called "the most forthright proponent of historical relativism in recent times," observes that "the presence of subjective concerns does not imply renunciation of the postulate of objectivity and the possibility of arriving at decisions in factual disputes."[647]

Summary and Conclusion

Some historians contend that there is no objective basis for determining the past. And even if there were an objective basis, they say, miracles are not a part of objective history. But as we have seen, these objections fail. History can be as objective as science. Geologists too have only secondhand,

fragmentary, and unrepeatable evidence viewed from their own vantage points and in terms of their own values and interpretive framework. In this regard history can be as objective as geology. Although it is true that interpretive frameworks are necessary for objectivity, it is not true that every worldview must be totally relative and subjective. Indeed, this argument is self-defeating, for it assumes that it is an objective statement about history that all statements about history are necessarily not objective.

As to the objection that miracle-history is not objectively verifiable, two points are important. First, miracles can occur *in* the historical process without being *of* that natural process. Second, the moral and theological dimensions of miracles are not totally subjective. They call for a subjective response, but there are objective standards of truth and goodness (in accordance with the theistic God) by which the miracle can be objectively assessed. It can be concluded, then, that the door for the objectivity of history and thus the objective historicity of miracles is open. No mere question-begging, uniformitarian principle of analogy can slam the door a priori. Evidence that supports the general nature of scientific law may not be legitimately used to rule out good historical evidence for particular but unusual events of history. This kind of argument not only is invincibly naturalistic in its bias but, if applied consistently, also would rule out much of known and accepted secular history. The only truly honest approach is to examine the evidence for an alleged miracle carefully in order to determine its authenticity.

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18
The Historical Reliability of the New Testament

In the previous chapter it was shown that history is objectively knowable. In the present chapter we will discuss whether the reports of the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ as presented in the New Testament documents are historically reliable. This chapter is an important step in the overall apologetic for historical Christianity. It will serve as a basis not only for the historicity of Christ's claims to be the incarnate Son of God but also for the historicity of the confirming miracle of the resurrection of Christ from the grave.

There are two important steps in establishing the historical reliability of the New Testament. We must establish, first, the authenticity of the New Testament *writings*, and second, the reliability of the New Testament *writers*. The first deals with the reliability of the manuscript copies we have of the original text, and the second with the reliability of the writers of the original documents in conveying the statements and events they record.

The Authenticity of the New Testament Documents

The direction of the argument in the next three chapters is as follows: (1) the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chap. 18); (2) these documents accurately present Christ as claiming to be God incarnate (chap. 19) and also to confirm his claim by showing that he fulfilled prophecy, lived a sinless and miraculous life, and predicted and accomplished his resurrection from the dead (chap. 20); (3) therefore, the deity of Christ is historically and miraculously confirmed.

We have three tasks in establishing the authority of the New Testament documents: first, an examination of the extant manuscript copies; second, a comparison of New Testament manuscripts with those of ancient secular history; third, the dating of the original sources of these manuscripts.

The Extant Manuscript Evidence for the New Testament

There is more abundant and accurate manuscript evidence for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world. There are more manuscripts copied with greater accuracy and earlier dating than for any secular classic from antiquity. First, let us examine the number and nature of the New Testament manuscripts themselves.[648]

The John Rylands Fragment (^{52}). This papyrus contains five verses from the Gospel of John: 18:31–33, 37–38. It is dated between AD 117 and 138. The great philologist Adolf Deissmann argued that it may be even earlier. The manuscript is housed in the John Rylands Library in Manchester, England.

The Bodmer Papyri (^{66}, ^{72}, ^{75}). These papyri date from about AD 200. They contain most of the Gospels of John and Luke along with the books of Jude, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter. These manuscripts contain the earliest complete copies of New Testament books. This means that within one century of the time the New Testament was completed we have multiple testimonies to the basic teachings, miracles, and resurrection of Christ. This is all that is needed to establish this crucial link in the apologetic argument for the truth of Christianity.

Codex Vaticanus (B). This manuscript dates from between AD 325 and 350. It is a vellum manuscript containing the whole New Testament as well as the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint, sometimes abbreviated LXX). It was discovered by modern textual scholars in 1475 when it was cataloged in the Vatican Library, where it still remains.

Codex Sinaiticus (א). This manuscript dates from about AD 340. It too is vellum and contains the whole New Testament and half of the Old Testament. Count Tischendorf discovered it in a monastery on Mount Sinai in 1844. It is contained in the collection at the University Library in Leipzig, Germany.

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C). This manuscript dates from about AD 350. It contains only part of the Old Testament but most of the New Testament. This early manuscript was written over but retrieved by chemical reactivation. The National Library in Paris possesses it.

Codex Alexandrinus (A). Dating from about AD 450, this too is a complete vellum manuscript of the Bible with only minor mutilations. It is housed in the National Library of the British Museum.

Although the foregoing great vellum manuscripts date from the fourth and fifth centuries, they represent in whole or in part an "Alexandrian"-type (Alexandria, Egypt) text that dates from AD 100 to 150, which takes us back to the threshold of the first century.

Codex Bezae (D). Dating from AD 450 or 550, this manuscript is written in both Greek and Latin. It was discovered in 1562 by the French theologian Theodore de Beza, who gave it to Cambridge University. This manuscript contains the four Gospels, Acts, and part of 3 John.

Other Early Greek Manuscripts. There are numerous early Greek manuscripts. Codex Claromontanus (D^p) dates from AD 550 and contains much of the New Testament. Codex Basiliensis (E), from the eighth century, has the four Gospels. Codex Laudianus (E^a), from the sixth or seventh century, contains Acts. These are followed by numerous other manuscripts with everything from parts to the whole New Testament dating from the ninth century on.

The total count of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament is now over 5,800. No other book from antiquity possesses anything like this abundance in manuscripts.

Comparison of the New Testament with Ancient Secular Writings

From the standpoint of a documentary historian, the New Testament has evidence vastly superior to that of any other book from the ancient world. This consists not only of the abundance and accuracy of the New Testament Greek manuscripts but also of the abundance of ancient translations of and quotations from the New Testament. The following chart will reveal the superior number, dating, and degree of accuracy of the New Testament over other books.[649]

Comparison of Ancient Texts

Author	Date Written	Earliest Copy	Number of Copies	Accuracy of Copy
Mahabharata	——	——	——	90%

Homer	9th cent. BC	——	643	95%
Herodotus	5th cent. BC	AD 900	8	——
Thucydides	5th cent. BC	AD 900	8	——
Demosthenes	4th cent. BC	AD 1100	200	——
Caesar	1st cent. BC	AD 900	10	——
Livy	1st cent. BC	——	20	——
New Testament	1st cent. AD (AD 50–100)	2nd cent. AD (ca. AD 130)	5,800	99+%
Tacitus	ca. AD 100	AD 1100	20	——

No other book is even a close second to the Bible on either the number or early dating of the copies. The typical secular work from antiquity survives on only a handful of manuscripts; the New Testament boasts thousands.

Furthermore, the average gap between the original composition and the earliest copy for most other books is over 1,000 years. The New Testament, however, has a manuscript within one generation from its original composition, whole books within about 100 years from the time of the autograph, most of the New Testament in less than 200 years, and the entire New Testament within 250 years from the date of its completion.

Finally, the degree of accuracy of the copies is greater for the New Testament than for other books that can be compared. Most books do not survive with enough manuscripts to make comparison possible. A handful of copies that are 1,000 years after the fact do not provide enough links in the missing chain or enough variant readings in manuscripts to enable textual scholars to reconstruct the original. Bruce Metzger does provide an interesting comparison of the New Testament with the Indian *Mahabharata* and Homer's *Iliad*. The *Iliad* possesses about 15,600 lines, with 764 of them in question. This would mean that Homer's text is only 95 percent pure. The national epic of India has suffered even more textual corruption than the *Iliad*, with some 26,000 lines in doubt. This would mean roughly 10 percent textual corruption; the manuscript of the *Mahabharata* that we have now is only a 90 percent accurate copy of the original.[650]

By contrast, various scholars have estimated the accuracy of the New Testament manuscripts as follows: The great Greek scholars Westcott and Hort estimated that only about 1/60 of the variant readings rise above "trivialities" and can be called "substantial variations." That would make the New Testament 98.33 percent pure. Early American biblical scholar Ezra Abbott said about 19/20 (95 percent) of the readings are "various" rather than "rival" readings, and about 19/20 (95 percent) of the rest make no appreciable difference in the sense of the passage. In Abbott's opinion, then, the text is 99.75 percent pure. A. T. Robertson, a noted authority on Greek, said the real concern is with about a "thousandth part of the entire text." So on Robertson's view the reconstructed text of the New Testament is 99.9 percent free from real concern.

Recently agnostic New Testament critic Bart Ehrman challenged the accuracy of the New Testament manuscript copies, claiming there are probably over 400,000 errors in them. However, this is completely misleading. Mariano Grinbank discovered 16 errors in Ehrman's book, *Misquoting Jesus*.[651] Since the first edition is reported to have sold 100,000 copies in the first three months, this would mean (the way Ehrman counts errors in the Bible manuscripts) that there are 1.6 million errors in Ehrman's book! Yet no reasonable person would argue that because of this we cannot trust the copies to convey Ehrman's thoughts on the matters discussed. Likewise, no reasonable person should

doubt the authenticity of the New Testament manuscripts either. Consider the following illustration of three different messages:

1. YOU HAVE WON TEN MILLION DOLLARS
2. THOU **HA**ST **WON** TEN MILLION DOLLARS [Notice the King James bias here]
3. Y'ALL **HA**VE **WON** $10,000,000 [Observe the Southern bias here!]

Notice that of the twenty-seven letters in line 2, only five of them (in bold) are the same in line 3. That is, only about 18.5 percent are the same. Yet the message is 100 percent identical! They are different in form but not in content. So, even with the many differences in the New Testament variants, 100 percent of the essential message comes through.

Even Ehrman admits the accuracy of the New Testament message: "*In fact, most of the changes found in early Christian manuscripts have nothing to do with theology or ideology.* Far and away the most changes are the result of mistakes pure and simple—slips of the pen, accidental omissions, inadvertent additions, misspelled words, blunders of one sort or another."[652] Noted manuscript expert Sir Frederic Kenyon said it best: "The interval between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."[653]

We may conclude, then, that from this documentary standpoint the New Testament writings are superior to comparable ancient writings. The records for the New Testament are vastly more abundant, clearly more ancient, and considerably more accurate in their text.

Support from New Testament Translations

In addition to the nearly 6,000 New Testament manuscripts in Greek, there are an additional 19,000 in other languages.

Latin: 10,000+
Ethiopic: 2,000+
Slavic: 4,000+
Armenian: 2,500+
Others: 500+

This makes a total of some 25,000 manuscripts of the New Testament. Nothing even close to this exists for any other book from the ancient world.

Support from Early Quotations of the New Testament

In addition to nearly 6,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and 19,000 manuscripts in other translations, there are over 36,000 citations of the New Testament in the early fathers of the church, including nearly every verse in the New Testament. Consider the following chart:

Second through Fourth Century Citations of the New Testament

Writer	Gospels	Acts	Pauline Epistles	General Epistles	Revelation	Totals
Justin Martyr	268	10	43	6	3 (266 allusions)	330
Irenaeus	1,038	194	499	23	65	1,819
Clement of Alexandria	1,017	44	1,127	207	11	2,406
Origen	9,231	349	7,778	399	165	17,922
Tertullian	3,822	502	2,609	120	205	7,258
Hippolytus	734	42	387	27	188	1,378
Eusebius	3,258	211	1,592	88	27	5,176
Grand Totals	19,368	1,352	14,035	870	664	36,289

These 36,000-plus citations of the New Testament from the early fathers include most of the New Testament. In short, as Sir Frederic Kenyon put it, "The number of mss. of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or the other of these ancient authorities. *This can be said of no other book in the world.*"[654]

The Reliability of the New Testament Writers

Now that we have established the reliability of the New Testament documents to convey what the original writers penned, we are prepared to examine the second pillar in the argument—namely, the reliability of the New Testament writers. Here too there are multiple lines of evidence, both external and internal, to support the claim that these writers accurately reported on the events and teachings of Jesus.

First we will consider the number of writers.

The Number of New Testament Writers

The New Testament contains twenty-seven books written by eight or nine writers (depending on whether Paul wrote Hebrews). The traditional writers were Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and the writer of Hebrews. By comparison most events from the ancient world are recorded by only one or two writers. So for the New Testament we have more written records by more authors than for any other book from antiquity. An ancient dictum, still followed today, reads: "A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (Deut. 19:15 NIV).

These traditional authors may be identified in the following way:

- Matthew—an apostle of Jesus
- Mark—an associate of the apostle Peter
- Luke—an associate of the apostle Paul
- John—an apostle of Jesus

- Paul—an apostle of Jesus
- Peter—an apostle of Jesus
- James—the brother of Jesus
- Jude—the brother of Jesus
- Hebrews—an associate of the apostles (2:3; 13:23)

The authorship of some of these books has been questioned by modern critics, but this is irrelevant to the main points being made here. First, even by critical dates, all these books come from the first century while eyewitnesses were still alive. Second, many of these books were written by the above-mentioned authors who were intimately connected to Jesus. Third, many of the books speak of eyewitness testimony on which they based their writings. This leads us to our next major point.

The Eyewitness Basis of Many New Testament Books

The following citations reveal the eyewitness nature of much of the New Testament (emphasis added).

The Gospel of John: "The man who *saw it* [the crucifixion] has given testimony, and his testimony is true" (John 19:35 NIV). And, "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24 NIV). In addition, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have *looked at* and *our hands have touched*—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1 NIV).

The Gospel of Luke: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first *were eyewitnesses* and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have *carefully investigated everything from the beginning*, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1–4 NIV).

Acts: "God has raised this Jesus to life, and *we are all witnesses of it*" (Acts 2:32 NIV). "Peter and John replied . . . 'We cannot help speaking about what we have *seen* and *heard*'" (Acts 4:19–20). "*We are witnesses of everything he did* in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and *caused him to be seen*" (Acts 10:39–40 NIV).

Paul's Epistles: "Am I not an apostle? *Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?*" (1 Cor. 9:1 NIV). "I passed on to you . . . that Christ . . . was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he *appeared* to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve. After that, he *appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time*, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he *appeared* to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all *he appeared to me* also" (1 Cor. 15:3–8).

Finally, "For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it *through a revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 1:11–12).

The Author of Hebrews: "How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us *by those who heard him.* God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (Heb. 2:3–4 NIV).

The Apostle Peter: "We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but *we were eyewitnesses* of his majesty" (2 Pet. 1:16). Also, "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and *a witness of Christ's sufferings* who also will share in the glory to be revealed" (1 Pet. 5:1).

On the basis of these texts and other evidence, numerous New Testament scholars hold that the New Testament is based on eyewitness testimony. These include the following scholars:

Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*.
Blomberg, Craig. *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*.
———. *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*.
Bruce, F. F. *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament.*
———. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*
Carson, D. A., and Douglas Moo. *New Testament Introduction*.
Craig, William Lane. *Knowing the Truth about the Resurrection*.
Dodd, C. H. *History and the Gospels.*
Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*.
Habermas, Gary. *The Historical Jesus*.
Hemer, Colin. *Acts in the Setting of Hellenic History.*
Kenyon, Frederic. *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts.*
Linnemann, Eta. *Is There a Synoptic Problem?*
Metzger, Bruce. *The Text of the New Testament.*
Robinson, Bishop John. *Redating the New Testament*.
Wright, N. T. *The Resurrection of the Son of God.*

The list includes a former New Testament critic (Linnemann), an atheist (Robinson), and a noted Roman historian (Hemer). Wright is a highly respected New Testament scholar. In addition, there are two renowned manuscript experts (Kenyon and Metzger), and many other widely known scholars. One citation from a reputed and widely read scholarly treatise sums it up well: Reading the Gospels as eyewitness testimony differs therefore from attempts at historical reconstruction behind the texts. It takes the Gospels seriously as they are; it acknowledges the uniqueness of what we can know only in this testimonial form. It honors the form of historiography they are. From a historiographic perspective, radical suspicion of testimony is a kind of epistemological suicide. It is no more practicable in history than it is in ordinary life.[655]

Support from the Critically Accepted Writings of the Apostle Paul

Not only does the New Testament possess multiple accounts of its central claims that Jesus is the Son of God, confirmed by many miracles and by his death and resurrection (see chap. 20), but it is also based on multiple eyewitness testimony. What is more, even without the Gospels we possess testimony to all crucial Gospel claims in the early and critically accepted epistles of Paul.

Most New Testament critical scholars acknowledge the authenticity of four of Paul's epistles (1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans), which are dated between AD 55 and 57, only two decades or so after the events of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. Consider the following Gospel claims confirmed by Paul in these early epistles:

1. Jesus's Jewish ancestry (Gal. 3:16);
2. his Davidic descent (Rom. 1:3);
3. his virgin birth (Gal. 4:4);
4. his life under Jewish law (Gal. 4:4);
5. that he had brothers (1 Cor. 9:5);
6. that he had disciples called "apostles" (1 Cor. 15:7);
7. one disciple was named James (1 Cor. 15:7);
8. that some had wives (1 Cor. 9:5);
9. that Paul knew Peter, James, and John (Gal. 1:18–2:16);
10. Jesus's poverty (2 Cor. 8:9);
11. his meekness and gentleness (2 Cor. 10:1);
12. his abuse by others (Rom. 15:3);
13. his teachings on divorce and remarriage (1 Cor. 7:10–11);
14. his view on paying wages of ministers (1 Cor. 9:14);
15. his view on paying taxes (Rom. 13:6–7);
16. his command to love one's neighbors (Rom. 13:9);
17. his view on Jewish ceremonial uncleanness (Rom. 14:14);
18. his titles of deity (Rom. 1:3–4; 10:9);
19. his institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23–25);
20. his sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21);
21. his death on the cross (Rom. 4:25; 5:8; Gal. 3:13);
22. that he died to pay for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Mark 10:45);
23. his burial (1 Cor. 15:4);
24. his resurrection on the "third day" (1 Cor. 15:4);
25. his postresurrection appearances to the apostles (1 Cor. 15:5, 7–8);
26. his postresurrection appearances to others (1 Cor. 15:6);
27. his present position at God's right hand (Rom. 8:34).

Apart from the multiple verifications of Jesus's acts and deeds in the Gospels, these epistles of Paul alone confirm the central truths of Christianity—namely, that Jesus is the Son of God in human flesh, who supported his claims by numerous miracles, including his resurrection from the dead.

Support from the Early Dates for the Gospels

Even the typically late critical dates for the Gospels (AD 70–100) are too early to be considered mythical. Based on Julius Müller's *The Theory of Myths* (1844), William Lane Craig wrote, "The writings of the Greek historian Herodotus enable us to test the rate at which a legend accumulates; the tests show that even the span of two generations is too short to allow legendary tendencies to wipe out the hard core of historical fact."[656] Two generations of forty years each would be at least eighty years. On this theory, from the time of the earliest New Testament writings (ca. AD 60), a full-orbed myth might have developed by about AD 140. And as a matter of fact this is exactly when the first

Christian mythological material begins, with *The Gospel of Thomas* and other apocryphal gospels. Myths have difficulty forming while the eyewitnesses are still alive because the witnesses are able to refute them.

The internal evidence against the basic New Testament story being mythical is also very strong. C. S. Lewis, a noted myth-writer himself, gives the reason: "All I am in private life is a literary critic and historian, that's my job. And I am prepared to say on that basis if anyone thinks the Gospels are either legend or novels, then that person is simply showing his incompetence as a literary critic. I've read a great many novels and I know a fair amount about the legends that grew up among early people, *and I know perfectly well the Gospels are not that kind of stuff*."[657]

More external support for early dates for the Gospels comes from some unlikely sources. Liberal critic and "Death of God" theologian Bishop John Robinson redated the New Testament to within a few years of the time Jesus died (ca. AD 33). Robinson argued that the Gospels should be dated as follows:[658]

Matthew: AD 40–60+
Mark: AD 45–60+
Luke: AD 57–60+
John: AD 40–65+

W. F. Albright, the dean of archaeology of the twentieth century, once a critic himself, confirmed what he believed were early dates for the New Testament, declaring, "In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century AD (very probably sometime between about 50 and 75 AD)."[659]

Clearly, these early dates are within the lives of the earliest eyewitnesses, and they are much too early for mythological development. They form part of the firm foundation for the reliability of the New Testament writers.

Support for the New Testament from Noted Roman Historians

Roman historians work in the same time period as the New Testament. They are accustomed to testing the reliability of evidence for events in that time period. With this in mind, the testimony of one noted Roman historian, A. N. Sherwin-White, is very significant: "So it is *astonishing* that while Greco-Roman historians have been growing confidence, the twentieth-century study of the gospel narratives, starting from no less promising material, have taken so *gloomy* a turn in the development of form-criticism . . . that the historical Christ is unknowable and the history of his mission cannot be written. This seems *very curious*." He calls the mythological view "*unbelievable*."[660] The emphasized words say it all: the gloomy view about the historicity of Jesus is unbelievable and very curious in view of the promising material available.

Another Roman historian, Colin Hemer, has written a classic tome supporting the authenticity of the writings of Luke, the associate of the apostle Paul who wrote Acts and the Gospel of Luke (see Luke 1:2; Acts 1:1).

First of all, Hemer gives multiple evidence for a date for Acts before AD 62. Several of the main arguments include the facts that Acts

1. makes no mention of the fall of Jerusalem—AD 70;

2. makes no reference to the Jewish War—AD 66;
3. gives no hint of Nero's persecutions—ca. AD 65;
4. ends with the apostle Paul still alive—ca. AD 65; and
5. ends with the apostle James still alive—ca. AD 62.

Since Josephus recorded James's death as having occurred in AD 62 (*Antiquities* 20.9.1), not mentioning these important events of the times would be like writing the life of President Kennedy after 1963 without mentioning his assassination (in 1963). This reasoning would date the Gospel of Luke no later than about AD 61. And since Luke mentions some gospels having been written before he wrote his (Luke 1:1)—and most scholars believe Matthew and Mark wrote before Luke—the earliest Gospels must have been written in the 50s, decades before the critics date them. Further, Gospels this early are (1) during the time of the eyewitnesses and (2) well before legends are known to develop.

What is more, Colin Hemer confirms the earlier testimony of Ramsay that Luke was an accurate historian since he possessed knowledge of

1. minute geographical details known to the readers;
2. specialized details known only to special groups;
3. specifics of routes, places, and officials not widely known;
4. correlation of dates in Acts with general history;
5. details appropriate to that period but not others;
6. events that reflect a sense of "immediacy";
7. idioms and culture that bespeak a firsthand awareness;
8. verification of numerous details of times, people, and events of that period best known by contemporaries.

Luke mentions some events that have been confirmed by other sources without making a single mistake. This makes him one of the most confirmed writers from antiquity.

And since he wrote a Gospel, there is every reason to believe he was accurately reporting Jesus's teaching, miracles, and resurrection as well. Sherwin-White sums up the situation well: "For Acts the confirmation of historicity is overwhelming. . . . Any attempt to reject its basic historicity even in matters of detail must now appear absurd. Roman historians have long taken it for granted."[661]

Support from the Historical Crosshairs in the Gospels and Acts

Another indication of the historicity of the Gospels is the historical crosshairs it provides for its own confirmation. For example, Luke writes, "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness" (Luke 3:1–2 NIV). An exact date is given (AD 29). All eight people are known from history. And all of them were known to live at this exact time. Clearly this is not a "once upon a time" story (myth).

Not only are these eight persons confirmed to be historical, but the Gospels list more than thirty persons who are also known from antiquity:

1. Agrippa I: Acts 12
2. Agrippa II: Acts 25
3. Ananias: Acts 23; 24
4. Annas: Luke 3; John 18; Acts 4
5. Aretas: 2 Corinthians 11
6. Bernice: Acts 25; 26
7. Augustus: Luke 2
8. Caiaphas: Matthew 26; Luke 3; John 11; 18; Acts 4
9. Claudius: Acts 11; 18
10. Drusilla: Acts 24
11. Egyptian: Acts 21
12. Erastus: Acts 19
13. Felix: Acts 23–25
14. Gallio: Acts 18
15. Gamaliel: Acts 5
16. Herod Antipas: Matthew 14: Mark 6; Luke 3; 23
17. Herod Archelaus: Matthew 2
18. Herod the Great: Matthew 2; Luke 1
19. Herod Philip I: Matthew 14; Mark 6
20. Herod Philip II: Luke 3
21. Herodias: Matthew 14; Mark 6
22. Salome, daughter of Herodias: Matthew 14; Mark 6
23. James: Acts 15; Galatians 1
24. John the Baptist: Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1
25. Judas the Galilean: Acts 5
26. Lysanias: Luke 3
27. Pilate: Matthew 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 18
28. Quirinius: Luke 2
29. Porcius Festus: Acts 24–26
30. Sergius Paulus: Acts 13
31. Tiberius Caesar: Luke 3

Books written during the lifetime of the eyewitnesses of the events narrated in them (like Luke and Acts) with confirmed references to historical figures are not legends. Rather, they are history. For this, and many other reasons, there is no need to take the Gospel records for anything else but history —reliable history.

Support for the Reliability of the New Testament Writers from Internal Evidence

At least ten lines of evidence from inside the New Testament documents support the conclusion that they were telling the truth about the words and works of Jesus that they recorded.

1. *They Made No Attempt to Harmonize Their Accounts.* There are many conflicts in their reports, which is what one would expect from eyewitnesses who are not in collusion but are telling the truth. Yet there are no demonstrable contradictions,[662] but rather there is confirmation of the central truths they related.

2. *They Included Material That Put Jesus in a Bad Light.* Writers who are making up a story to put their leader in a good light, to say nothing of making him out to be God in human flesh, do not say the type of things the Gospels say about Jesus. These include the following: (a) His hometown people tried to kill him (Luke 4:29–30). (b) His half brothers did not believe he was the Messiah (John 7:5). (c) His relatives thought he had lost his mind (Mark 3:21, 31). (d) Many of his followers deserted him (John 6:66). (e) He was called a "drunkard" (Matt. 11:19). (f) He was considered "demon-possessed" by many (Mark 3:22; John 7:20 NIV). (g) Many of the Jews of his day believed that he was a deceiver (John 7:12) and a "madman" (John 10:20).

3. *They Retained Many Self-Incriminating Details.* The writers put many passages in the text that were self-incriminating, including the following: (a) The disciples fell asleep twice when they were supposed to pray (Mark 14:32–41). (b) Peter betrayed Christ three times (Mark 14:66–72). (c) The disciples fled for fear of their lives (Matt. 26:31, 56). (d) Most of the disciples were unbelieving even after they received reports that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matt. 28:17). (e) One refused to believe after it was known by all the other disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:25). (f) They were dim-witted (Mark 9:32; Luke 18:34). (g) Peter was called "Satan" by Jesus (Mark 8:33).

4. *They Included Many Demanding Sayings of Jesus.* No attempt was made by the writers to hide the demanding sayings of Jesus, including (a) his insistence that his disciples eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6); (b) his command that they should not honor their deceased relatives by attending their funerals (Matt. 8:21–22); (c) his requirement that they "hate" their parents in order to prove their love to him (Luke 14:26); (d) his teaching that even haters are guilty of murder in their heart (Matt. 5:21–22); (e) his command that they turn the other cheek to those who strike them (Matt. 5:39).

5. *They Distinguished Their Words from Jesus's Words.* Even without quotation marks it is easy to distinguish between what Jesus said and what the authors of the Gospels said. The apostle Paul clearly distinguished between what Jesus said and what he was writing, declaring: "To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband. . . . To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her" (1 Cor. 7:10–12).

6. *They Did Not Deny Their Testimony under Threat of Death.* From the first Christian martyr, Stephen (Acts 7), to Peter (Acts 4:18–19; 5:28–29), to the apostle Paul, who suffered horrendous persecution (2 Cor. 11), stoning (Acts 14), and even death (2 Tim. 4:6–8; 2 Pet. 1:14), the apostles did not waver on their testimony, even when threatened by death. Indeed, history records that eleven of the twelve apostles died as martyrs, yet not one denied his testimony.

7. *They Claimed Their Record Was Based on Eyewitnesses.* As noted above, many of the writers claimed to have eyewitness testimony to the events of which they spoke. This is not true of most of the history recorded in ancient times. For example, what we know of the life of Alexander the Great comes from a couple of biographers who lived several hundred years after the events.

8. *They Had Women Witnessing the Resurrection before Men.* In a patriarchal culture, where a woman's testimony counted only half of that of a man, nonetheless, women are listed as composing

the first two groups to witness the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20). Someone making up a story on the resurrection would be highly unlikely to list men as third on the list for Jesus's postresurrection appearances.

9. *They Challenged Readers to Check Out the Facts.* Peter, reminding one of the earliest adversarial audiences that they had seen Jesus do miracles, said, "as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). And Paul spoke of five hundred who saw the resurrected Christ, adding, "most of whom are still alive" (1 Cor. 15:6), thus challenging his readers to check out the facts for themselves.

10. *They Discarded Long-Held Jewish Beliefs Overnight.* The earliest Jewish converts to Christianity discarded long-held and cherished Jewish beliefs virtually overnight. They began eating pork, which was forbidden by the Old Testament, after Peter received a revelation from God (Acts 10, 15) that what God called clean they should not call unclean. Even though the Jewish religion had called for worship on Saturdays for a millennium and a half, they soon began meeting on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). This is highly unlikely, unless Jesus had resurrected on Sunday, appeared on Sunday (John 20:26), and sent the Holy Spirit on Sunday (Acts 2) to inaugurate the church he had promised to build (Matt. 16:16–18; cf. Acts 1:8).

Support for the Reliability of New Testament Writers from Noted Legal Experts

The legal profession, which is trained in determining life-and-death issues in the courtroom, has long had expertise in testing the validity of a testimony. One of the greatest legal experts in early America was Simon Greenleaf (1783–1853), professor of law at Harvard University. He wrote the text used to train attorneys, titled *A Treatise on the Law of Evidences* (1853). When challenged to apply these rules to determine the validity of the New Testament witness, he wrote a book titled *The Testimony of the Evangelists.* In it he wrote:

> The narratives of the evangelists are now submitted to the reader's perusal and examination, upon the principles and by the rules already stated. . . . If they had thus testified on oath, in a court of justice, they would be entitled to credit; and . . . their narratives, as we now have them, would be received as ancient documents, coming from the proper custody. If so, then it is believed that every honest and impartial man will act consistently with that result, by receiving their testimony in all the extent of its import.[663]

He added:

> All that Christianity asks of men on this subject, is, that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with their fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses be compared with themselves, with each other, and with surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to rigorous cross-examination. The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability, and truth.[664]

In short, if the New Testament witnesses had testified in a court of law under cross-examination, their testimony would have withstood the scrutiny.

Other attorneys both before and after have come to the same conclusion. Thomas Sherlock, British bishop and apologist, wrote *The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection* (1729). Frank Morison a skeptical attorney, was converted to Christianity after examining the evidence and wrote of it in his book *Who Moved the Stone?* Highly trained scholar and attorney John Warwick Montgomery based his whole apologetic for Christianity on this same premise in his book *History and Christianity*. Attorney and former skeptic Lee Strobel presented the same case in his popular book *The Case for*

Christ. Supreme Court attorney Irwin Linton wrote: "So invariable has been my observation that he who does not accept wholeheartedly the evangelical, conservative belief in Christ and the Scriptures has never read, has forgotten, or never been able to weigh—and certainly is utterly unable to refute—the irresistible force of the cumulative evidence upon which such faith rests" (see his book *A Lawyer Examines the Bible*).

Support for the Credibility of the New Testament Writers from Numerous Archaeological Finds

Noted biblical scholar Nelson Glueck wrote: "As a matter of fact, however, it may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible."[665] Donald J. Wiseman, another archaeologist, noted: "The geography of Bible lands and visible remains of antiquity were gradually recorded until today more than 25,000 sites within this region and dating to Old Testament times, in their broadest sense, have been located."[666]

Here are just a few of the things relating to the life of Jesus that archaeologists have identified or discovered:[667]

- Bethlehem, Jesus's birthplace (Luke 2)
- a coin of Caesar Augustus, emperor when Jesus was born (Luke 2)
- Herod, king when Jesus was born (Matt. 2)
- the Jordon River and the place of Jesus's baptism (Matt. 3)
- the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus taught (Mark 1)
- the Pool of Siloam, where Jesus healed the blind man (John 9)
- the synagogue at Capernaum where Jesus taught (Luke 7)
- the foundation of Herod's temple court, where Jesus taught (Mark 11)
- Jerusalem, where Jesus lived, taught, and died (John 19)
- an inscription of Pontius Pilate, under whom Jesus was crucified (Matt. 27:11–14)
- the ossuary of Caiaphas the high priest, who tried Jesus (Matt. 26:3)
- the arch of Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70 (Matt. 24)
- a first-century crucifixion victim named Johannan who died as Jesus did (Matt. 27; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19)
- a first-century tomb with a stone rolled in front such as the one used for Jesus (Mark 16; John 20)

Luke, the author of the third Gospel, is commended by classical historian G. D. Williamson for showing "complete familiarity with the thought, expression, and habitual terminology of the speakers, and . . . what memories the people of that time possessed!—if not on written notes, which we have reason to believe were commonly made."[668]

It has been largely due to the archaeological efforts of Sir William Ramsay that the critical views of New Testament history have been overthrown and its historicity established. Ramsay was himself converted from the critical view by his own research into the evidence:

> I began with a mind unfavorable to it [Acts], for the ingenuity and apparent completeness of the Tübingen theory had at one time quite convinced me. It did not lie then in my line of life to investigate the subject minutely; but more recently I found myself often

brought into contact with the book of Acts as an authority for the topography, antiquities, and society of Asia Minor. It was gradually borne in upon me that in various details the narrative showed marvelous truth.[669]

The irony of the situation is that today professional historians accept the historicity of the New Testament. It is some of the critics who, using prearchaeological and philosophical presuppositions, reject the historicity of the New Testament. As the renowned archaeologist and paleographer William F. Albright notes, "All radical schools in New Testament criticism which have existed in the past or which exist today are pre-archaeological, and are, therefore, since they were built in *der Luft* [in the air], quite antiquated today."[670]

Support for Reliability of New Testament Writers from Non-Christian Sources

Finally, non-Christian sources from the first few centuries support the reliability of many of the crucial points made in the Gospel records. F. F. Bruce documents these in his book *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament*.[671] Here are a few of those sources:

1. *A Jewish Historian, Josephus (AD 37–100).* The Jewish historian Josephus, contemporary of Christ, abounds with references to figures familiar to New Testament readers. Bruce summarized the evidence: "Here, in the pages of Josephus, we meet many figures who are well-known to us from the New Testament; the colorful family of the Herod's; the Roman emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and the procurators of Judea; the high priestly families—Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias, and the rest; the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and so on."[672]

Moreover, Josephus wrote of "the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, whose name was James" (*Antiquities* 20.9.1). And in a more explicit but disputed passage the *Antiquities* says: "At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. . . . Pilate condemned Him to be condemned and to die. And those who had become His disciples did not abandon His discipleship. They reported that He had appeared to them three days after His crucifixion and that He was alive; accordingly, He was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders" (18.33, Arabic text).

2. *A Roman Historian, Cornelius Tacitus (ca. AD 55–after 117).* Tacitus wrote of Nero's attempt to relieve himself of the guilt of burning Rome: "Hence to suppress the rumor, he falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius: but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also" (*Annals* 15.44).

3. *A Greek Satirist, Lucian (Second Century).* Lucian alludes to Christ in these words: "the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world. . . . Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they were all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws" (*On the Death of Peregrine*, 11–13).

4. *A Roman Historian, Suetonius (ca. AD 120).* Suetonius, court official under Emperor Hadrian, made two references to Christ. In the *Life of Claudius* (25.4) he wrote, "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [another spelling of *Christus* or *Christ*], he [Emperor Claudius] expelled them from Rome." Elsewhere, in the *Lives of the Caesars* (26.2), he

wrote: “Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.”

5. *Pliny the Younger (ca. AD 112).* Writing to the emperor concerning his achievements as governor of Bithynia, Pliny the Younger gave information on how he had killed multitudes of Christians—men, women, and children. He said he attempted to “make them curse Christ, which a genuine Christian cannot be induced to do.” In the same letter (*Epistles* 10.96) he wrote of Christians: “They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, and never to deny a truth when they should be called upon to deliver it up.”

6. *A Samaritan-Born Historian, Thallus (ca. AD 52).* According to early Christian historian Julius Africanus (ca. AD 221), “Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness [at the time of the crucifixion] as an eclipse of the sun—unreasonably, as it seems to me. It was unreasonable, of course, because a solar eclipse could not take place at the time of the full moon, and it was the time of the paschal full moon when Christ died.”

7. *Letter of Mara Bar-Serapion (After AD 73).* According to Bruce this letter residing in the British Museum is by a father to his son in prison. In it he compares the deaths of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Jesus as follows: “What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished. . . . But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given.”[673]

8. *The Jewish Talmud (Completed by AD 500).* The Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 43a, “Eve of Passover”) contains the following explicit reference to Jesus: “On the eve of Passover they hanged Yeshu (of Nazareth) and the herald went before him for forty days saying (Yeshu of Nazareth) is going to be stoned in that he hath practiced sorcery and beguiled and led astray Israel. Let everyone knowing aught in his defense come and plead for him. But they found naught in his defense and hanged him on the eve of Passover.”

Another Talmudic section says Rabbi Shimeon ben Azzai wrote concerning Jesus, “I found a genealogical roll in Jerusalem wherein was recorded, Such-an-one is a bastard of an adulteress” (*Yebamot* 4,3; 49a). The Jewish belief that Jesus was an illegitimate son and demon-possessed is also recorded in the New Testament (cf. Mark 3:22; John 8:41).

It is important to remember that these are adversarial witnesses, which enhances the value of their testimony. From these alone some have built a case for the resurrection of Christ being the best explanation for all the facts.

A Summary of the Events Affirmed

Core New Testament truths are contained in these non-Christian sources. The following is a summary of the events:

1. Jesus was from Nazareth.
2. He lived a virtuous life.
3. He performed unusual feats.
4. He introduced new teaching contrary to Judaism.
5. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate.

6. His disciples believed he rose from the dead.
7. His disciples denied polytheism.
8. His disciples worshiped him.
9. His teachings and disciples spread rapidly.
10. His followers believed they were immortal.
11. His followers had contempt for death.
12. His followers renounced material goods.

These non-Christian writers of the first 150 years after Christ and what they attested to are listed in the following chart.

Non-Christian Sources within 150 Years of Jesus

Source	AD	Existed	Virtuous	Worshiped	Disciples	Teacher	Crucified	Empty Tomb	Disciples' Belief in Resurrection	Spread	Persecution
Tacitus	115	X			X		X	X*		X	X
Suetonius	117–38	X		X	X			X*		X	X
Josephus	90–95	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Thallus	52	X					X*				
Pliny	112	X		X	X	X		X*		X	X
Trajan	112?	X*		X	X					X	X
Hadrian	117–38	X*			X					X	X
Talmud	70–200	X					X				X
Toledoth Jesu	fifth century	X						X			
Lucian	second century	X		X	X	X	X				X
Mara Bar-Scrapion	first through third century	X	X	X		X	X	X*			
Phlegon	80?	X					X	X	X		

*implied

Clearly this evidence from non-Christian historical sources of the first few centuries is more than sufficient to substantiate core events in the life of Christ. And when combined with the multiple other evidence given above, it provides a strong argument for the historicity of the New Testament.

The Cumulative Case for New Testament Reliability

Since most of the evidences for the reliability of the New Testament are independent lines of support, they form a cumulative case. When combined they provide an overwhelming argument for the historical reliability of the New Testament. In brief, there are (1) more manuscripts, (2) earlier manuscripts, and (3) better copied manuscripts for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world. This established beyond reasonable doubt *the reliability of the New Testament writings* as an accurate copy of the original text.

As for the *reliability of the New Testament writers* as conveyers of the truth of the events of which they spoke, again, (1) we have more writers, (2) whose accounts are based on more eyewitnesses, (3) with more events confirmed by the early writings of Paul, (4) based on Gospels with earlier dates, (5) supported by Roman historians, (6) which possesses more internal evidence, (7) confirmed by more legal evidence, (8) supported by more archaeological evidence, and (9) attested by more non-Christian writers than any book from ancient times that the world has ever seen!

Systematic Consistency as a Truth Test for the New Testament

In chapter 8 the test for truth inside a worldview was established to be systematic consistency. A view is counted true if (1) it best fits the facts, (2) it is internally consistent, (3) it is comprehensive, covering all the relevant facts, and (4) it is personally relevant.

Factual Fit. The above discussion certainly shows the factual reliability of the New Testament, for the accuracy of the New Testament is supported by at least ten different lines of evidence.

Consistency. I have shown elsewhere that no contradictions have been demonstrated in the Gospel records. In examining several hundred alleged contradictions in the New Testament, I found not one that was logically contradictory to another when both were viewed in their proper contexts.[674]

Comprehensiveness. Within the finite time and space available, we have considered as comprehensively as possible the view that the New Testament documents are reliable. We excluded no relevant views from the discussion; we weighed the central criticism and its alternative.

So the issue of the reliability of the New Testament meets the criterion too.

Personal Relevance. Some also consider the personal and existential relevance of a truth claim to be part of its test. If so, one can point to the multimillions of "satisfied customers," including the author, who have found the teachings of Christ to be eminently livable. And, after all, the best proof of whether a monogamous, lifetime marriage is a blessed experience is not those who are divorced, but those who have succeeded at it for a lifetime (or near lifetime).

Likewise, it is not the experience of those who have not found the teaching of Christ personally and spiritually relevant that counts against the applicability of those teachings to life. Rather, it is the experience of those who have satisfactorily applied them to their lives that supports their truth. For one of the best authors in modern times to demonstrate this, one cannot help but mention the edifying discourses of Søren Kierkegaard.

We may conclude, then, that the truth claims of the New Testament are supported by all aspects of the test of systematic consistency. Hence, the New Testament has earned the right to be called true. That is, its truth claims fit the facts, match their object, and tell it like it is. They correspond to reality.

Responses to Questions Raised by Form Criticism

In spite of the overwhelming evidence for the reliability of the New Testament writers, some critics have not been satisfied. They have raised several objections that need to be addressed.

Form criticism holds that the life and teachings of Christ have been historically obscured by the religious needs and interests of the early church. The central claim is that, to a significant degree, the New Testament writers were not merely *reporting*, but were *creating*, the events they related. Critics with this perspective believe that the oral traditions were formed into various "stories" and woven into continuous narratives by means of the editorial summaries—which are devoid of historical value—in accordance with the life setting of the early church. Because it is impossible to know what really happened, the "sayings" of Jesus are strung together like pearls on the thread of religious interest without regard for historical accuracy. According to the more radical critics, when the records are demythologized, all that remains is at best the mere fact that an unusual man, Jesus of Nazareth, lived in the early first century. Even the original words of Jesus are for the most part lost within the re-forming and reshaping process.

No doubt many needs and interests of the early church did reveal themselves in the way the Gospel writers put together their material on the life of Christ. Each writer clearly manifests motifs and interests characteristic of his work. It has long been observed that Matthew presents Christ as King, Mark presents him as a Servant, Luke as perfect Humanity, and John as God incarnate. Each writer worked his material around his particular motif. Each writer too had a particular audience in mind in the early church of a generation or so after Christ's death. The needs of that particular audience no doubt influenced the way the writer put his material together. Furthermore, each writer had to select from vast material, both oral and written (cf. Luke 1:1–3; John 21:25), that was available to him. However, having admitted all this, we are a long way from the charge that the Gospel records are not a reliable historical summary of the major events and teachings of Christ. For several definitive reasons we should reject the form criticism hypothesis in favor of the historical reliability of the Gospels.[675]

Form Criticism Minimizes or Neglects the Role of the Apostles and Eyewitnesses

If the form critics are correct, then we must assume that the eyewitnesses allowed distortions of the life of Christ to occur in the documents during their lifetime. A number of apostles outlived the first Christian writings about Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. The writings began in about AD 50; most apostles lived until the Neronian persecutions (about AD 67), and John probably lived on to near the end of the century. Even granting for the sake of argument the assumption that their interests were not primarily historical but religious, it is inconceivable that they would allow gross misrepresentations regarding central teachings and events in Christ's life.

It Is Highly Improbable That the Early Church Had No Biographical Interests

The assumption that the early church had only a religious interest is gratuitous and contrary to the fact. Each of the Gospels has the same overall outline or history of events. The Synoptic Gospels reveal an even closer parallel. Matthew and Luke apparently follow the basic outline of Mark, who reflects the elements in the early kerygma (proclamation) of Peter in Acts 10:37–43.

Luke shows a special interest in history, taking pains to point out political personages and events that paralleled the life of Christ. Luke mentions three emperors in his writings (Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius; see Luke 2:1; 3:1; and Acts 11:28). Luke fixes the time of Jesus's birth during reigns of Caesar Augustus and Herod the Great (Luke 1:5; 2:1). Numerous Roman governors appear in Luke's writings, including Pilate, Sergius Paulus, Gallio, Felix, and Festus. The descendants of Herod the Great—Herod Antipas, the vassal kings Herod Agrippa I and II, Bernice, and Drusilla—are also mentioned by Luke. Leading members of the Jewish priestly caste are also recorded, including Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias, and the famous Rabbi Gamaliel. Luke mentions the proconsul of Achaia, Gallio (Acts 18:12), who came to prominence, according to the Delphi Inscription,[676] in July of AD 51. Luke makes numerous other historical references in his works, leaving no doubt as to his historical interest.[677]

The other Gospels are not without historical, chronological, and biographical interests. Matthew records Jesus's family lineage (chap. 1). He mentions the visit of the Magi from the East; the decree of Herod to slaughter the babies around Bethlehem (chap. 2); the imprisonment and beheading of John the Baptist by Herod the Tetrarch (chap. 14); and the leaders associated with the trial and crucifixion of Christ, such as Pilate and Caiaphas (chaps. 26–27). John is replete with chronological references, such as to the "first" miracle of Jesus (John 2:11), to the time of day (John 4:6; 19:14; and many others), and to the time of the year (John 2:23; 6:4; 7:2). Mark too reflects both a general chronological interest in the order of events in Christ's life and specific interest in times and places. Mark alone records all three times of day that relate to Jesus's crucifixion (see 15:25, 33). In the face of these and many more facts, the claim that the Gospel writers had no historical interests is simply untrue.

Form Criticism Neglects the Testimony of Luke in the Prologue of His Gospel

Luke not only reflects a historical interest but also openly claims to have one and reveals that many others in the early church reflected the same interest in their written accounts: "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us . . . it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account . . . that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1–4). We observe, then, that there were in Luke's day (by AD 60) already "many" written accounts of Jesus's life. Furthermore, Luke was definitely interested in the historical "truth," in an "orderly account." And the sources of these written accounts were "eyewitnesses." On the supposition of form criticism this testimony would be false, since the critics depend on oral tradition being re-formed over a prolonged period of time in order to fit the religious needs of the early church. Hence, the hypotheses of form criticism fly in the face of the clear testimony of Luke. Since the evidence for the date and authorship of Luke is good, it is best to reject the unjustified assumption of the form critics.

There Is No Good Explanation as to Why Details Are Remembered and the General Outline Is Forgotten

On the presupposition of the form critics, many of the details of Jesus's sayings were remembered, but the general outline of the events was forgotten. This seems highly implausible on the face of it. Why should the early church forget the overall order of events? One must assume either a terrible lapse of memory on the part of the first generation of believers or else the Gospels were not put

together until much later than the times already established above. Neither supposition fits the facts well. Their memories were very good on many little details, including the exact Aramaic words Jesus used on occasions (see Mark 5:41; 15:34), and the first Gospel (perhaps Mark) was composed only twenty or so years after Jesus died.

Necessary Time for Classification and Formation of Material Is Not Available

As has already been stated, the time lapse between Jesus's death (AD 29–33)[678] and the first New Testament records (ca. AD 50–60) is too short to fit the form criticism theory. According to this view the early church would need enough time to disseminate, collect, classify, and form the "stories" and "sayings" of Jesus out of their original context into the "life setting" of the early church. One generation is not enough time to accomplish this, for several reasons. First, some of the eyewitnesses would still be alive to correct any distortions. Second, it would take more than a generation to accomplish all the steps in the process. As long as the generation of people following the apostles was alive (say, AD 60–90), it would be exceedingly difficult to conceive how they would be unable to detect major divergence from the truth taught them by the apostles. In order to make the theory work for this short a time period, one would have to assume several things contrary to fact: (1) that the apostles had no historical interest; (2) that there were no written accounts during the first generation after Christ (ca. AD 30–60); and (3) that memories of even the general outline of events were so diminished in one generation that nothing significant of historical value can be retrieved. It is easier to believe the testimony of Luke and the early church fathers, who claimed that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the Gospels.

The Gospels Are Vastly Different Than Folklore and Myth

According to form criticism the Gospels are more like folklore and myth than historical fact.[679] They were passed on and preserved as a tale because of their religious value and not because of their historical value. But even a quick comparison of the New Testament first-century Gospels with apocryphal Gospels of the second and third centuries will reveal the difference. The fanciful tales of Jesus's alleged childhood miracles, the heretical admixture of gnosticism, and the unrealistic portrayal of the apostles mark off the apocryphal from the authentic Gospels as clearly as night is different from day. The truth of form criticism is appropriately applied to these apocryphal writings of the second and third centuries. But by clear contrast the New Testament documents have the ring of authenticity.

Form Criticism Wrongly Assumes That the Early Church Did Not Distinguish between Jesus's Statements and Their Own Words

Form criticism is contradicted by the facts of the early church's usage of Jesus's words. Contrary to the form theory, the early church did clearly distinguish between their own words and those of Jesus. For the most part it is not difficult to make a red-letter edition of the Bible. Paul clearly differentiated between Jesus's words and his own on the question of marriage (1 Cor. 7:10, 12, 25). Likewise, Paul delineated the words of Jesus on paying ministers (1 Tim. 5:18) and on the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23–25). Again, when preaching to the Ephesian elders Paul quoted a saying of Jesus that is not

found in the four Gospels (Acts 20:35). In view of New Testament practice it is gratuitous to assume that the early church blurred the sayings of Jesus beyond distinction with their own words.

Form Criticism Neglects the Individuality and Ability of New Testament Writers

Why should we assume that the Gospels were put together by the early church over a period of years? Were the apostles incapable of composing them? Luke was an educated man. Mark probably came from a cultured family. John wrote in very simple language. Matthew was used to keeping records as a tax collector. There is no apparent reason why the Gospels in their present form could not have been the works of these men. Further, why not assume the differences in the Gospels are due to the separate sources, individual interests, and creativity of the different authors? Luke tells where he got his information (Luke 1:1–3)—namely, from extant written accounts. Matthew could have obtained his unique material from his own notes on Jesus's life and teaching. Mark appears to follow the outline of Peter's kerygma (Acts 10) and was no doubt privy to Peter's firsthand information. John was probably a confidant of many private conversations by virtue of his youth and by his family's entrance into the upper circles in Jerusalem. In view of these situations, there is no reason why the facts cannot be easily explained via the separate sources, styles, and interests of the individual writers.

Gospel Stories Do Not Grow by Accretion over the Years

The evolutionary theory of the Gospel material is contrary to several other facts. Not every story grew in detail over the years. Many critics consider Mark to be the earliest Gospel. But some material not found in later accounts is found in earlier ones. For example, Mark's Gospel is considered earlier than the others by most of these scholars, and yet Mark alone names the blind man Bartimaeus (10:46). Further, Mark names the disciples who came to Jesus on the Mount of Olives (13:3), whereas Mathew does not (24:3). Mark alone records that Jesus was himself a "carpenter" (Mark 6:3) and not merely the "son of a carpenter" as in Matthew 13:55. Mark alone gives the details of the young man who streaked out of the garden (Mark 14:51), a reference that many believe refers to Mark himself. And if Matthew is the first Gospel, which the early fathers believed, then the whole theory is falsified, since he has far more material and discourses than Mark. In either event, there is no evidence that the later versions of the stories were more detailed than the earlier ones, as form critics would have us believe.

It Fails to Refute the Overwhelming Evidence for the Historicity of the Gospels

In short, form criticism fails to counter the very strong cumulative evidence (provided above). This included multiple, eyewitness-based accounts, supported by non-Christian sources and historians as well as legal experts and numerous archaeological finds. Form criticism provides no real reason why the Gospel accounts should not be accepted as reliable versions of what Jesus really did and said.

The "Faulty Memory" Hypothesis

Some scholars are willing to acknowledge an early date for some written accounts of Jesus's life but are unwilling to grant their accuracy. They would argue that after thirty years the disciples had "misty memories." How, for example, could most writers remember what was said and done thirty or forty years after the fact? Some people have difficulty testifying in court about events that happened only months before!

In response, we must say first that the events to which the disciples were testifying were impact events, which leave a more lasting impression on our memories. Most Americans remember what they were doing when the World Trade Towers were attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001. The events surrounding what the disciples believed to be the incarnation of the Son of God were even greater impact events. Hence, they would be even easier to remember.

Second, memory was much more developed in ancient times than it is for more literate peoples today. Before the ready availability of written and printed documents, life depended much more heavily on memory. Like a muscle, the brain works better with usage. The need to use it in ancient time was more acute and, hence, the memory more developed.

Third, since spaced repetition is an important key to memory, the repeated preaching and teaching about these happenings would have made a lasting impression on their memories.

Fourth, there were numerous eyewitnesses to all the major events and teachings of Jesus. One could serve as a cross-check on the memory of the other.

Fifth, the critics forget that there were many early written notes and records on Jesus's life (Luke 1:1–3). Matthew was a tax collector and therefore used to keeping records. There is now evidence that wax tablets were used in the first century for recording things.

Sixth, many critics who are not old enough to have had the experience (as I have) do not realize that even trivial details can be remembered for fifty or sixty years or more. I can remember jokes I heard nearly sixty years ago virtually word for word. How much more could the disciples remember the great essentials truths from the One they believed was God incarnated in human flesh (see chaps. 19–20).

Seventh, the critics forget the Jesus promised that he would not let his disciples forget what he had taught them. He promised, "The Holy Spirit . . . [will] bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26). If humans by their natural powers can remember events and details for over a half century, there is absolutely no reason why men whose memories were supernaturally activated by God could not remember the things that are recorded in the Gospels.

Finally, the argument from memory fails for one fatal reason: multiple other standards—historical, archaeological, and legal (see above)—have shown that, the arguments for memory aside, the factual accuracy of the New Testament records has been supported. Any argument about the potential faultiness of memory must give way to the hard evidence for factual accuracy of the New Testament. Despite desperate protest by some critics, then, both the authenticity and the historicity of the New Testament documents are firmly established today.

Do We Have the Exact Words of Jesus?

Despite all the evidence for the reliability of the New Testament documents, the question still remains whether we have the exact words of Jesus. In response, it must be remembered that even in the Greek New Testament we probably do not have the exact words of Jesus, since it is generally believed that Jesus spoke in Aramaic. So apart from a few phrases in the Gospels, such as, "*Eli, Eli, lema*

Savachthani" ("My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"), we have in the Greek original only a translation of Jesus's words. Additionally, some names remain in Aramaic, such as *Tabitha* (Acts 9:36, 40). But in general we do not have the exact words Jesus used, but an accurate translation of them into Greek by eyewitnesses and contemporaries who were largely bilingual.

The question remains as to how literally and accurately we have the words of Jesus put into Greek. A careful comparison of parallel passages has led most conservative New Testament scholars to the conclusion that in many cases we do not have the *ipsissima verba* (Lat. exact words), but only the *ipsissima vox* (Lat. same voice, or meaning). It is true that in many cases the parallel passages are word for word the same. But whatever paraphrasing or summarizing went on, we have every reason to believe that we have the same meaning, if not always the same words, preserved in the original Greek text of the New Testament. However, in some parallel passages we do not have the exact same words. So, even if Jesus spoke in Greek (as some have suggested), we do not have the exact same words in every case. Nonetheless, the original text is "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16), and the memories of the Gospel writers were supernaturally activated by God, in accordance with Jesus's promise: "The Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (John 14:26; cf. 16:13).

Summary and Conclusion

The reliability of the New Testament records is a crucial link in the apologetic argument. If God exists (chap. 15), then miracles are possible and can be used to confirm a message from God. And if the New Testament records are historically reliable, then we can examine them to see if Jesus claimed to be and proved to be the Son of God (chaps. 19–20) and if he confirmed the Bible to be the Word of God (chap. 21).

But at this point, we can be assured that the New Testament documents are historically reliable, for we have more, earlier, and better-copied manuscripts for it than for any other book from antiquity. Further, we posses more eyewitness and contemporary testimony in these documents that is supported by archaeological, historical, and legal sources than for any other book from that time.

Therefore, unless one is willing to wipe out all testimony from the past—including all of secular history and even science—we must conclude that not only do we have reliable copies of what Jesus and his apostles said, but what they said is reliable. In short, when the New Testament declares that Jesus said it, he actually said it. And when it affirms that Jesus did it, he actually did it. The New Testament is not just a good story; it is a *true* story!

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19
The Claim for the Deity and Authority of Jesus Christ

Orthodox Christianity claims that Jesus of Nazareth was God in human flesh. This doctrine is absolutely essential to true Christianity. If it is true, then Christianity is unique and authoritative. If not, then Christianity does not differ in kind from other religions. This chapter will move from the historical to the theological, from Jesus of Nazareth to Jesus the Son of God.

The basic logic of this apologetic for Christianity is as follows: (1) the New Testament is a historically reliable record of the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see chap. 18); (2) Jesus taught that he was God incarnate (chap. 19); and (3) Jesus proved to be God incarnate by fulfilling Old Testament prophecy, by a miraculous life, and by rising from the grave (chap. 20). Therefore, Jesus of Nazareth is Deity in human flesh.

An Examination of the Claims for the Deity of Jesus Christ

We have already shown that the New Testament documents are historically reliable. The New Testament has been confirmed to be accurate not only in its general outline of history but in its specific detail as well. We have noted also that the ear- and eyewitnesses of Christ passed down contemporary accounts of Christ's words and deeds (chap. 18). These words of Jesus were not only memorized but also written down by qualified witnesses (Luke 1:1–3). Furthermore, the New Testament writers made a clear distinction between their words and the words of Jesus (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 7:10, 12; 11:24–25). Hence, a red-letter edition of the Bible that distinguishes the words of Jesus from those of the authors of the Gospels is a realistic possibility. That is, since there is both proved integrity and accuracy of the New Testament writers, there is consequent historical reliability in their quotations of Jesus. It is not necessary to assume that the New Testament relates always a word-for-word record of Jesus's teachings. It will be sufficient to hold that it presents the essence of his teaching on the subject at hand. Building on this basis, we will now examine precisely what it was that Jesus claimed with respect to his own origin and nature. Following this we will examine what his most immediate followers taught about his deity.

An Examination of Jesus's Claims to Be Deity

Several lines of evidence prove that Jesus did claim to be God: his claims to be the Yahweh of the Old Testament, his acceptance of the titles of deity, his messianic claims, his acceptance of worship, the implications of many of his actions, the authority of his commands, and the reaction of the first-century monotheistic Jews to his claims and actions.

Jesus's Claim to Be Yahweh. The most forthright claims of Christ to be God are revealed in his identification with the Yahweh of the Old Testament. "Yahweh" is the spelling given to the tetragrammaton, or designation for God (i.e., YHWH) in the Old Testament. This word for God is spelled with an initial capital and then three small capitals, "LORD," in the English Old Testament of the King James (1611), Revised Standard (1952), and other versions. The American Standard Version (1901) transliterated it as "Yahweh." In every case these terms refer to deity. Unlike the Hebrew word *adonai* (usually translated "Lord"), which sometimes refers to humans (cf. Gen. 18:12) and other times to God, the word *L*ORD (Yahweh) always refers to God. For example, "God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD [Yahweh] I did not make myself known to them" (Exod. 6:2–3). So sacred was this name, YHWH, that devout Jews would not even pronounce it. Many take the word to mean "underived existence" or "he who is" from the "I AM" of Exodus 3:14. Everything else is an idol or false god. Nothing else was to be worshiped or served, nor were sacrifices to be made to them (Exod. 20:5). Yahweh was a "jealous God" and would not share either his name or his glory with another. Isaiah wrote, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god'" (Isa. 44:6). Again, "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols" (Isa. 42:8; cf. 48:11).

That the Yahweh of the Jewish Old Testament would not give his name, honor, or glory to another (Isa. 42:8), it is little wonder that the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth drew stones and cries of "blasphemy" from first-century Jews. The very things that the Yahweh of the Old Testament claimed for himself Jesus of Nazareth also claimed, as the following verses reveal: Jesus said "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11), but the Old Testament declared, "The LORD [Yahweh] is my shepherd" (Ps. 23:1). Jesus claimed to be judge of all humans and nations (John 5:27–29; Matt. 25:31–46), but Joel, quoting the LORD, wrote: "for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations" (Joel 3:12). Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), whereas Isaiah said, "The LORD [Yahweh] will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory" (60:19). Jesus claimed in prayer before the Father to share his eternal glory, saying, "Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:5). But Isaiah quoted Yahweh vowing, "My glory I give to no other" (42:8). Jesus spoke of himself as the coming "bridegroom" (Matt. 25:1), which is exactly how Yahweh is depicted in the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 62:5; Hosea 2:16). In the book of Revelation Jesus is quoted by John as saying, "I am the first and the last" (1:17), which are precisely the words Yahweh used to declare that there was no other God besides himself (Isa. 42:8). The Old Testament declares that "The LORD [Yahweh] is my light" (Ps. 27:1), but Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

Perhaps the strongest and most direct claim of Jesus to be Yahweh occurs in John 8:58, where he said to the Jews, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." The Jews' reaction left no doubt as to how they understood his claim. They knew he had claimed not only existence before Abraham but also equality with God. They promptly prepared to stone him (cf. John 8:58 and 10:31–33). Jesus had clearly claimed that the "I AM" of Exodus 3:14, which refers to Yahweh alone, referred also to him. The claim was either blasphemy or an indication of deity. Jesus left no doubt as to which interpretation he wished them to take. This claim to be "I am" is repeated in Mark 14:62 and in John 18:5–6. In the latter case the effect on those around Christ was dramatic: "they drew back and fell to the ground" (v. 6).

Jesus's Claim to Be Equal with God. On numerous occasions Jesus claimed to be equal with God in ways other than assuming the titles of deity. Jesus said to the scribes, "That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . I say to you [the paralytic], rise, pick up your bed, and go home" (Mark 2:10–11). Jesus had just said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (v. 5), to which the outraged scribes retorted, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (v. 7). Jesus's claim to be able to forgive sins, the scribes' understanding of that claim, and Jesus's healing of the man are all evidence of his authority, and make it clear that Jesus was claiming a power that God alone possessed (cf. Jer. 31:34).

Jesus solemnly claimed another power that God alone possessed—namely, the power to raise and judge the dead: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live . . . and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:25, 29). Jesus removed all doubt of the intentions of his claim when he added, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will" (v. 21). According to the Old Testament, however, God alone is the giver of life (1 Sam. 2:6; Deut. 32:39) and can raise people from the dead (Ps. 2:7; cf. Acts 13:33–34). Hence, in the face of orthodox Jewish belief that God alone could resurrect the dead, Jesus boldly proclaimed not only his ability to bring the dead back but also his right to judge them. The Scriptures, however, reserved for Yahweh the right to judge men (Joel 3:12; Deut. 32:35). In this same category, Jesus exhorted his disciples, "believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). The pretensions of this claim to a monotheistic people were evident. The Jews knew well that no man should claim honor and belief with God. They reacted with stones (John 5:18) and ripping their garments (Mark 14:62–63) because they believed this was blasphemous.

Jesus's Claim to Be the Messiah-God. The Old Testament foreshadowing of the Messiah also pointed to his deity. Hence, when Jesus claimed to fulfill the Old Testament messianic predictions, he thereby also claimed the deity attributed to the Messiah in those passages. The psalmist wrote of the Messiah, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (from 45:6, quoted in Heb. 1:8). Psalm 110:1 relates a conversation between the Father and the Son: "The LORD [*Yahweh*] says to my Lord [Heb. *Adonai*], 'Sit at my right hand.'" Jesus applied this passage to himself in Matthew 22:43–44. Isaiah the prophet, in a great messianic prophecy, exhorted Israel, "Behold your God!" (40:9). Isaiah 9:6 declares the Messiah to be Deity, saying: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father [i.e., Father of eternity], Prince of Peace." Clearly "Mighty God" and "Father of eternity" are designations of deity. Indeed the great messianic passage from Daniel 7:13, quoted by Jesus at his trial before the high priest (Mark 14:62), implies the deity of the Messiah. When Jesus quoted this passage to the high priest who demanded that Jesus declare whether he was Deity, the high priest left no doubt as to how he interpreted Jesus's claim. "Are you the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the Blessed?" the high priest asked. "And Jesus said, 'I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'" At this the high priest tore his garment and said, "What further witnesses do we need? You have heard his blasphemy" (Mark 14:61–64).

Also, the Samaritan woman said to Jesus, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." Jesus said clearly, "I who speak to you am he" (John 4:25–26). This was a clear claim to be the Jewish Messiah whom the Old Testament declared to be God.

In short, the Old Testament not only predicted the Messiah but also proclaimed him to be God. And when Jesus claimed to be a fulfillment of the Old Testament messianic passages (cf. Luke 24:27, 44; Matt. 26:54), he laid claim to possessing the deity these passages ascribed to the Messiah. Jesus removed all doubts of his intentions by his answer before the high priest at his trial (Mark 14:62).

Jesus's Acceptance of Worship. The Old Testament forbids worship of anyone but God (Exod. 20:1–4; Deut. 5:6–9). In the Bible, humans were not to accept worship (see Acts 14:15), and even angels refused to be worshiped (Rev. 22:8–9). And yet Jesus received worship on at least ten occasions without rebuking a single one of his worshipers. The healed leper worshiped him (Matt. 8:2), and the ruler knelt before him with his petition (Matt. 9:18). After Jesus had stilled the storm, "those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God'" (Matt. 14:33). The Canaanite woman bowed before Christ in prayer (Matt. 15:25), as did the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Matt. 20:20). Just before Jesus commissioned his followers to disciple all nations, "they worshiped him" (Matt. 28:17). Earlier in the same chapter the women who had just been at the tomb met Jesus, "and they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him" (v. 9). Mark writes of the demoniac of the Gerasenes that "when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped him" (Mark 5:6 RSV), and the blind man said, "'Lord, I believe,' and he worshiped him" (John 9:38). Not to rebuke these people who knelt before him, prayed to him, and worshiped him was not only utterly pretentious but also blasphemous, unless Jesus considered himself to be God. The repetition and the context necessitate the conclusion that Jesus not only accepted but sometimes also explicitly approved of worship from the disciples, as he did from Thomas, who cried out, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Jesus's Blessing of Those Who Called Him God. On one occasion Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who recognized his deity. When Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus answered, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 16:16–17). Also, at the climax of the Gospel of John, when even his most doubting disciple exclaimed of Jesus, "My Lord and my God," Jesus accepted his acclamation without rebuke, saying, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:28–29).

Jesus's Request That Believers Pray in His Name. Jesus not only asked people to believe in him (John 14:1) and to obey his commandments (John 14:15), but he also asked them to pray in his name. "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it," he said (John 14:13). Again, "if you ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14). Later, Jesus added, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7). Indeed, Jesus insisted, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Not only did the disciples of Christ pray in Christ's name (1 Cor. 5:4) but they also prayed to Christ (Acts 7:59). There is no doubt that both Jesus intended and his disciples understood it was Jesus's name that was both to be invoked before God and to be used as God's name when addressing him in prayer.

But prayer is a form of worship, and the Bible forbids worshiping anyone but God. Indeed, reaffirming Deuteronomy 6:13, Jesus declared, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Matt. 4:10).

Jesus's Demand That He Be Given Honor Equal to God's. He claimed Jesus should be honored just as the Father is honored, declaring: "All should honor the Son *just as* they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father" (John 5:23; emphasis added). It is true that the Bible also claims that we should honor other humans. The commandment says: "Honor your father and your mother" (Exod. 20:12). Paul said, "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are

owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed" (Rom. 13:7). However, nowhere in the Bible does it say that we should honor mere humans "just as" we honor God. But this is what Jesus demanded.

Jesus's Claim to Be God by Forgiving Sins. In Mark 2:5 Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." But the scribes immediately recognized this as a claim for deity and replied: "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (v. 7). By claiming the ability to forgive sins (cf. John 8:1–11), Jesus was claiming to be God.

Jesus's Claim to Be God by Proclaiming He Would Resurrect All the Dead. Other persons were given by God the power to raised the dead (e.g., Elijah and Paul). But they did not claim to be able to resurrect all the dead on the last day. However, Jesus did. He said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. . . . All who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:25, 29). But raising the dead is clearly a power that only God has (1 Sam. 2:6; Deut. 32:39).

Jesus's Claim to Be God by Proclaiming to Be the Judge of All People. As is evident from the passage in John 5 just cited, Jesus claimed not only the power to raise all the dead but also the power to decide their eternal destiny, sending "those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29). He added elsewhere, "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day" (John 12:48). In Matthew 25 he claims this ultimate authority when he says, "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' . . . Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. 25:34, 41). In this strictly Jewish, monotheistic context no mortal human could legitimately claim such power.

Jesus's Placing His Words on the Same Level as God's. Jesus not only accepted the titles and worship due Deity alone but also often placed his words on a par with God's. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, . . . But I say unto you . . ." (Matt. 5:21, 22) is repeated over and over again. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:18–19). God had given the Ten Commandments through Moses, but Jesus added, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another" (John 13:34). Jesus once taught that "until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law" (Matt. 5:18). Later Jesus put his own words on the same level as the Old Testament Law of God, saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Speaking of anyone who rejects him, Jesus declared, "The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day" (John 12:48). In view of his categorical and authoritative pronouncements we are left with but one conclusion: Jesus intended his commands to be on the level with those of God. His words were equally authoritative with God's words.

Jesus's Claim to Be God in His Parables. Jesus made numerous implicit claims to be God. Many of these are tucked away in parables.[680] The logic of the claim is this: (1) in the Old Testament God referred to himself by a certain image; (2) Jesus used this image to refer to himself; (3) therefore, Jesus used this image to claim that he was God. These images include (a) the *Sower* (Luke 8:5–8; cf. Num. 24:6–7; Ps. 80:8–15); (b) *Director of the Harvest* (Matt. 13:24–30; cf. Isa. 27:3–12; Jer. 51:33); (c) a *Rock* (Matt. 7:24–27; cf. Ps. 19:14; 28:1); (d) a *Father* (Luke 15:11–32; cf. Deut. 32:6; 2 Sam. 7:14); (e) *Forgiver of Sins* (Luke 7:41–50; cf. Exod. 32:32; 34:7); (f) *Vineyard Owner* (Matt.

20:1–16; cf. Deut. 8:8; Ps. 80:8–15); (g) the *King* (Luke 19:11–27; cf. 1 Sam. 12:12; Ps. 10:16); (h) *Shepherd* (John 10:1–18; cf. Ps. 23; Ezek. 34). Though these were indirect claims to deity, nonetheless, they were powerful because they involved a story, bypassed defenses to direct discourse, and allowed the listener to engage in self-discovery.[681]

Throughout Jesus's claims several important points emerge. First, there is no question that Jesus often accepted and sometimes even encouraged the appellations and attitudes appropriate only for God. Second, Jesus himself unquestionably affirmed by words and actions these characteristics and prerogatives appropriate only to deity. Third, the reaction of those around him manifests that they too understood him to be claiming deity. The disciples responded with "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16) or "my Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Unbelievers exclaimed, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming!" (Mark 2:7). When Jesus claimed to be one with the Father, the Jews wanted to stone him, as they said, "for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God" (John 10:33). This they repeated on several occasions (cf. John 5:18; 8:59). The high priest reacted similarly when he heard Christ solemnly swear to his divine origin (Mark 14:62–64). Whatever one may think about the truth or falsity of Christ's claims, it should be clear to the unbiased observer of the New Testament record that Jesus claimed to be equal to and identical with the Yahweh of the Old Testament.

The cumulative case for Christ's claim to be God is overwhelming. No human of any other major religion ever made such claims. Before examining the evidence for these claims (in chap. 20), we must address some of the counterclaims used against Christ's claim to deity.

An Examination of Some Alleged Counterclaims to Christ's Deity

In spite of the numerous passages in which Christ claimed deity (above) and the many in which his immediate disciples claimed deity for him, some critics have still appealed to select texts (out of their proper context) to show Jesus and his followers disclaimed deity. These will be examined briefly and explained in their proper context. First, a brief description of the alternative view of Christ:

1. Adoptionism—claimed that Jesus was only a man adopted (at his baptism) by God as his "Son" because of Jesus's divine powers.
2. Subordinationalism—affirmed that the Son is subordinate in nature to the Father. He is less than fully God.
3. Arianism—held that the Son is not God but the first created being. He is not the same as God but only like God.
4. Nestorianism—claimed there were two persons, one divine and one human, and only the human person (Jesus) died for our sins, so the person who died for us was not the divine Son of God. Hence, his death had no divine significance and cannot save us.

All these views deny the deity of Jesus of Nazareth, who made numerous claims to be fully God in human flesh. Let's look at some of the texts used to support these views.

Jesus Claimed to Be God Only in a Derivative Sense. Since Jesus acknowledged that his authority came from God (John 10:18; Matt. 28:18), some have argued that Jesus was God only in a derivative sense. That is, he derived his divine authority from God and was God's representative on earth, but

he was not God himself. Thus only the Father was God in an ultimate and essential sense; the Son (Jesus) was God only in a derivative or lesser sense.

In response, we may note, first, that when Jesus claimed to be the "I AM" of Exodus 3:14 (John 8:58), this was not God in a derivative sense. This was the very God of the universe, Yahweh, who said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.' . . . 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations" (Exod. 3:14–15). Jesus did not claim here to be *from* the I AM; rather, he claimed to *be* the I AM.

Second, Jesus claimed to be Yahweh (see above), and in Isaiah Yahweh declared, "I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other" (Isa. 42:8). Yet Jesus claimed to have this glory in John 17:5, saying, "Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed."

Third, no created derivative of God commands worship. Jesus declared, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him *only* shall you serve" (Matt. 4:10; emphasis added). Yet, as noted above, Jesus accepted worship on at least ten occasions without ever once rebuking the worshipers. Indeed, he even gave praise for it (Matt. 16:16–18).

Fourth, when Jesus claimed to be speaking with authority he received from God (e.g., John 10:18; Matt. 28:18), he was merely referring to his role in the Triune Godhead as a Son, who submits to the Father, not as an inferior or created being who is sent from the Father (cf. Phil. 2:5–8; 1 Cor. 15:28). But as a human son of a human father is of the same human essence as his father, so also as the Son of God, Jesus is equal to God in his essence, and is subordinate only in his role or function as a Son. Hence, Jesus on earth did speak of derivative *authority* from the Father, but never of a derivative deity or of being of a lesser *nature*.

Finally, a derivative deity is a contradiction in terms. One is either the Creator or a creature. There is nothing in between. And Jesus was repeatedly proclaimed as Creator in Scripture. Jesus's close and eyewitness disciple John said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1–3). The apostle Paul wrote, "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16). But the Creator cannot make another Creator; he can make only a creature. The uncreated cannot create another uncreated Being. Hence, either Jesus was a creature, which the Bible clearly says he was not, or else he is the uncreated Creator.

Jesus Said the Father Was Greater Than He Was. Jesus said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28). But the Father is clearly not greater in his nature. Nothing can be greater than God. The Father was only greater in office, not in *nature*. He was not greater in essence, but in function. As the Son, Jesus was equal in *nature* to the Father, for both Father and Son share the same nature. But as the Son, Jesus had a different role than the Father. As for his essential attributes, Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). The audience to whom Jesus spoke obviously understood it this way, for "the Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?' The Jews answered him, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God'" (John 10:31–33).

Jesus Denied Knowing Everything as God Does. The Bible tells us that Jesus "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). He was also ignorant of the time of his second coming, for he confessed, "But

concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). But God knows everything; he is omniscient. Therefore, Jesus could not be God. So say the critics of Christ's deity.

However, Jesus has two natures: one divine and one human. He is both God and human; he is the God-Human. It depends on which nature in Christ we are speaking about. As God, he knew everything. As a human, he did not know everything, but only what he could know by his finite nature or what the Father revealed to him. And God had not revealed to him the time of his second coming. Jesus said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7); "what I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me" (John 12:50); "all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

Jesus Denied That He Was Good like God. When the rich young ruler called Jesus "good," Jesus replied: "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone" (Mark 10:18). This is taken by critics as a denial of Jesus's deity.

First of all, this statement is not a denial of anything—let alone Jesus's deity. It is a question. He is asking the young man if he understands what he is saying. In essence Jesus is saying, "Do you realize what you are saying? Are you calling me God?" So rather than denying his deity, Jesus is probing the young man's glibness, for the young man also said he kept all the commandments, and Jesus proved he had not by asking him to give all his riches to God. His unwillingness shows that he has not even kept the first and greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36–37).

Jesus Called the Father God. On the cross Jesus prayed, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). If Jesus recognized that the Father was his God, then Jesus could not be God himself, the critics reason.

However, this passage is making no denial about the Son; it is making an affirmation about the Father—namely, that he is God. This is true. It is also true that Jesus is God since there is more than one person in God. Further, the Father sometimes calls the Son God. In Hebrews 1:8 we read: "But of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.'" It is appropriate for either of these two members of the Trinity to call the other God for one simple reason—they are both God. They both share the same essential nature of deity.

Jesus Called Other Humans "Gods" Too. An often-quoted passage is John 10:35, where Jesus said, "If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—." Clearly, Jesus is referring to humans here (from Ps. 82:6), so critics argue that Jesus is claiming to be god in a lesser sense—like other humans are gods.

However, when we examine Psalm 82 we see that it is speaking about early judges and that it also insists, in the same verse: "Like men you shall die." They are called "gods" using a term (Heb. *elohim*) that sometimes refers to humans. But he did not call them "LORD" (Yahweh)—a term that always refers to deity. In the light of the use of "gods" in Psalm 82, Jesus is using an a fortiori (with the greater force) argument that goes something like this: "If the Scripture calls human judges gods because they stand in the place of God, making life or death decisions, then how much more is it proper for me to call myself God since 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30) in essence, not one by mere representation, as an earthly judge is?" To read this passage as an antideity text is to take it out of context and as contrary to numerous other texts where Jesus claims to be God in essence (see above).

Jesus Is Called the "Firstborn" of Creation. Some Arians (followers of Arius, who denied Christ's deity) appeal to phrases like "firstborn" (Col. 1:15) to prove that Jesus was really only a created being, not God. This, they insist, must mean he was the first one "born" or created in the

universe. Some, like Jehovah's Witnesses,[682] believe that Jesus was Michael the archangel, whose name means "who is *like* God."

However, nowhere is Jesus called an angel. It says in this very passage that Jesus created all the angels (Col. 1:17). And Hebrews declares: "For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'? Or again, 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son'? And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (1:5–6).

The term "firstborn" can mean firstborn in *rank* or firstborn in *chronological order*. Obviously, since Jesus is Creator of all angels and even worshiped by them, the term "firstborn" in this context must mean firstborn *over* all creation, not the first one born *in* creation.

Jesus Is Called the Beginning of God's Creation. Like "firstborn," the term "beginning" (Rev. 3:14) is misunderstood. It means "beginning" in the absolute sense of "nothing before him," not in the relative sense of "the first creature that was created." "Beginner" in the absolute sense means Beginner *over* all creation, not the first one born *in* creation. This meaning is borne out when the same term "beginning" is used of God, the Father who is God (21:5–6).

Jesus Was Said to Be Begotten by God. A number of verses refer to Jesus as "begotten" by God. (e.g., John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4). Psalm 2 is often quoted in this regard: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed. . . . I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'" (Ps. 2:2, 7); Hebrews 1:5 cites this very verse. And John 3:16 speaks of God's "only begotten Son" (KJV). From these passages the critics often argue that Jesus was not eternal but was begotten with a beginning as are other creatures.

In response, first, if this were true then it would contradict a whole host of Scriptures (listed above) that declare Jesus to be eternal (John 1:1–2) and the Creator of all other things (John 1:3; Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:16–17). Further, the word "begotten," like the word "firstborn" (see Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:6), does not necessarily mean something or someone who had a beginning. It is the Greek word *monogenēs*, meaning "unique" (in kind) or "only," as many modern translations render it (see NAB, NIV, and ESV). It is used of Isaac (Heb. 11:17), though he was literally not Abraham's only son (he had Ishmael), because he was unique in that he was the son of the promise. It is sometimes used of an only child of a human parent (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38).

Other verses that speak of Christ as being "begotten" use a different Greek word, *gennaō*, which is a normal word for begetting an offspring (cf. Matt. 1:2, 3, 4, etc.). However, when used of Christ in Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 (from Ps. 2:4), it means "to be begotten from the dead" (i.e., resurrected), as the context indicates (see Acts 13:33–35).

It is true that early creeds speak of the Son as being generated or begotten of the Father, but they make it very clear that Christ was "eternally begotten"[683] and that he was "not made" but "of one Being with the Father." So this eternal Father-Son relationship in no way diminishes Christ's deity, for he was "God from God" and "true God from true God."[684] Likewise, the creed declares that he was not created.

The Claim of Jesus's Disciples That He Was God

In addition to Jesus's numerous claims to be God, his immediate disciples made the same claim for him. It is one thing for a first-century Jew to claim to be God, but it is quite another to get other monotheistic Jews to believe it. Both Jesus and the disciples knew the Jewish Shema very well:

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mark 12:29; cf. Deut. 6:4). Paul stated the Jewish belief well when he wrote, "For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth . . . yet for us there is one God" (1 Cor. 8:5–6). Both polytheism and idolatry were abhorrent to a Jew, and yet these first-century Jewish disciples of Jesus found it necessary to attribute deity to Jesus of Nazareth in many ways.

The Earliest Disciples' Use of Names of Deity for Jesus

It is important to remember that those who are calling Jesus God and thus representing him as identical to Yahweh in the Old Testament were not second-century distant followers who never knew him firsthand. Rather, they were eyewitnesses and contemporaries of Christ who knew him personally. And we know this because we have first-century documents based on eyewitness testimony from individuals (see chap. 18).

The Writings of John. The author wrote: "The man who saw it [the crucifixion] has given testimony, and his testimony is true" (John 19:35 NIV). And, "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24 NIV). In addition, the First Epistle of John declares: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1 NIV). This author for most of Christian history has been considered by almost all to be the apostle John. He said of Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He adds, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (v. 14).

John also called Jesus the "first and the last" (Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13), a title that Yahweh had taken to himself in the Old Testament (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). Both Jesus and Yahweh are viewed as the author of eternal words (cf. Matt. 24:35; Isa. 40:8). The psalmist wrote, "The LORD [Yahweh] is my light" (27:1), but John claimed Jesus was "the true light" (John 1:9). John also records that Jesus was the glorious God on the throne in Isaiah's vision (Isa. 6), that Jesus shared the "glory" of God, which God does not give to another (Isa. 42:8).

The Writings of Paul. The apostle Paul spoke of Christ as the one in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col. 2:9). In Titus 2:13 he described Jesus as being "our great God and Savior." To the Romans he spoke of "the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen" (Rom. 9:5). To the Philippians he said Christ is "in the form [essence] of God" and possessed "equality with God" (2:5–6). Paul often used Christ's name in apostolic blessings along with other members of deity (e.g., Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2). In 2 Corinthians 13:14 Paul signs off with the great trinitarian blessing: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Other New Testament Writers' Use of Titles of Deity for Jesus. Likewise, "The LORD [Yahweh] is our rock" is a common way to speak of God in the Old Testament (see Ps. 18:2; 95:1), but the disciples call Jesus their "rock" (1 Cor. 10:4) or "stone" (1 Pet. 2:6–8). Yahweh was also a husband or "bridegroom" to Israel (Hosea 2:16; Isa. 62:5), which is how the New Testament relates Christ to his church (Eph. 5:28–33; Rev. 21:2). "The LORD [Yahweh] is my shepherd," David wrote (Ps. 23:1). Peter called Christ "the chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4), and the writer of Hebrews spoke of Christ as "the great shepherd" (13:20). Whereas the Old Testament speaks of the Lord as the forgiver of sins (Jer. 31:34; Ps. 130:4), the apostles boldly proclaim that only in Jesus's name are sins forgiven (Acts

5:31; Col. 3:13). The Old Testament function of "redeemer" (cf. Hosea 13:14; Ps. 130:7) is in the New Testament given over to Christ (Titus 2:14; Rev. 5:9). The same is true of the title "savior" (Isa. 43:3); Jesus is called "the savior of the world" (John 4:42). The Old Testament Yahweh jealously guarded his glory, declaring, "I am the LORD [Yahweh]; that is my name; my glory I give to no other" (Isa. 42:8), and yet Paul speaks of Jesus as "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8). The title "judge" of mankind was reserved for Yahweh in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen. 18:25; Ps. 94:2), but the disciples taught that "Jesus Christ . . . is to judge the living and the dead" (2 Tim. 4:1).

The term *Lord* (Gk. *Kurios*) was used of Christ by his immediate followers (e.g., John 6:68; 20:28; Acts 1:6; Rom. 1:7; etc.). But there are good reasons for taking this as a title of deity when used of Christ. First, this was the common word used for God by the Greek-speaking Jews in Jesus's time. Second, it was the common word used to translate the Hebrew Old Testament term meaning "Lord" when that word was used to represent *Yahweh*. Third, it was the explicit term used in the New Testament for passages that refer to Yahweh. For example, when Paul says that one day "every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11), this is an allusion to Isaiah 45:22–24, where Yahweh claims, "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance." Thus, when Romans speaks of "[confessing] . . . Jesus as Lord" (Rom. 10:9; cf. 1 Cor. 12:3), it is clear that New Testament believers realized that they were confessing that Jesus is God.

Jesus as the Messiah-God. Many Old Testament messianic passages make it clear that it is Yahweh who is to be the Messiah. Yahweh is called "king" (Zech. 14:9), and it is the "angel [messenger] of Yahweh" who will redeem Israel (Isa. 63:9). Yahweh is the "stone," and yet the Messiah is to be the rejected "stone" (Ps. 118:22). The Messiah is spoken of in the Old Testament as "Lord" when it is written, "The LORD [Yahweh] says to my Lord [*Adonai*]" (Ps. 110:1), a passage that the New Testament writers apply to Christ (Acts 2:34–35). Isaiah provided a messianic challenge to the Jews, saying, "Behold your God!" (40:9). Indeed, there is no clearer messianic passage on the deity of Christ than Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father [Father of eternity], Prince of Peace." With these predictions the New Testament writers concur, declaring Jesus to be "Immanuel" (which means "God with us") (Matt. 1:23, from Isa. 7:14). In brief, the Old Testament Messiah was Yahweh, and the New Testament writers identify Jesus with the Old Testament Messiah.

One often-overlooked passage in Zechariah says literally in the Hebrew text, "When they look on *me* [Yahweh speaking] whom they have pierced" (12:10). The New Testament writers do not hesitate to apply this twice to Jesus, thereby affirming the identity of the Yahweh who was pierced and the Jesus who was crucified (cf. John 19:37; Rev. 1:7). To him in his role as Messiah, one day "every knee [would] bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10–11). But the passage from which Paul takes this citation declares: "For I am God, and there is no other. . . . To me every knee shall bow, and every tongue swear allegiance" (Isa. 45:22–23). The implications of this are strong: Yahweh alone is God, and to him every knee shall one day bow. But Paul declares that it is Jesus-Yahweh before whom one day all will bow; they will all confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord [Yahweh], to the glory of God the father."

Divine Powers Attributed to Jesus. The disciples of Christ not only gave him the titles of Yahweh or Deity but also attributed to him powers that only God possesses. The New Testament writers declare that Jesus raised the dead (John 5; 11), and yet the Old Testament declares, "The LORD kills and brings to life" (1 Sam. 2:6; cf. Deut. 32:39). Isaiah pronounced the Lord "the everlasting God . . . the Creator of the ends of the earth" (40:28), and Jeremiah called him "the one who formed all things" (10:16); the New Testament writers speak of all things being created through Christ (John 1:3; Col.

1:16). Likewise, for the Jews, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7; cf. Jer. 31:34); and yet without hesitation the New Testament writers attribute this same power to Jesus (Acts 5:31; 13:38). Such an attribution should remove all reasonable doubt as to whether they believed in the deity of Christ.

The Association of Jesus's Name with God. The Yahweh of the Old Testament jealously guarded his name and glory; it was utter blasphemy to associate any other name with God's. And yet without hesitation the disciples used the name of Jesus in prayer (1 Cor. 5:4). On occasion they even prayed directly to Jesus (Acts 7:59). Often in prayers or benedictions Jesus's name is used alongside God the Father's in such phrases as, "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:3; cf. Eph. 1:2). At other times three names are associated in a "trinitarian" formula, such as the command to baptize "in the *name* of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19; emphasis added). The same association is made in the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14). Such association in a monotheistic context is tantamount to claiming deity for the person so associated with God.

Direct Declarations of Jesus's Deity. Thomas's pronouncement "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28) is more than an exclamation; properly understood in the context of the Fourth Gospel, it is the climax of the disciple's progressive understanding of who Jesus really is. In Colossians Paul forthrightly declares Christ to be the one in whom "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (2:9). In Titus Jesus is called "our great God and Savior" (2:13), and the writer of Hebrews addresses Christ thus: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" (1:8). Paul elsewhere speaks of Christ as the "form of God," a phrase that means of the essence of God, paralleling the phrase "form of servant," which means the nature or essence of a servant (Phil. 2:6–7). Elsewhere in the New Testament Christ's deity is portrayed by a similar phrase, "the image of God" (Col. 1:15), meaning in this context not only the representation (as it means elsewhere; cf. Gen. 1:26) but also the manifestation of God himself. Hebrews strengthens this description of Christ's deity, saying that "he reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power" (1:3 RSV).

The prologue of John is unequivocal on the subject of Christ's deity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The absence of the definite article "the" does not indicate that this verse should be translated "the Word was a god." The grammatical construction without the definite article means "the Word was of the essence of God," which is a strong way to describe the Word's deity. The New Testament contains many other intimations of Christ's deity, the strongest of which are those that relate to his being Creator of all things.

Jesus as the Creator of the Universe. There is no doubt that the Old Testament presents God alone as Creator of the universe (Gen. 1; Isa. 40; Ps. 8). And when the disciples of Christ declare Jesus to be the One through whom all things were created, the conclusion that they are thereby attributing deity to him is unavoidable. John wrote, "All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1:2). Paul said, "All things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16), and then added, "and in him all things hold together" (v. 17). The context of this passage makes it clear that there are no exceptions; Christ is the Creator of all things, including all angels and everything visible or invisible (v. 16). Nowhere is it made more clear that Christ is not a creature—angelic or otherwise—than in the relation of angels to him (Col. 1:15–17). Since Christ could not be

both the Creator of everything and at the same time a creature himself, it is necessary to conclude that he is himself the uncreated Creator of all creation.

Jesus as Obeyed and Worshiped by Angels. Jesus received worship from humans on some ten occasions (cf. Matt. 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:17; Mark 5:6; 8:2; John 9:38; 20:28). This he did without ever rebuking the worshiper, and sometimes he seems to have encouraged the worship (see above, under "Jesus's Acceptance of Worship" and "Jesus Claimed to Be God Only in a Derivative Sense"). But what removes any lingering doubt that the disciples of Christ believed that he should be worshiped as God is the fact of angelic worship. Jesus is portrayed as being "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come" (Eph. 1:21). Even the demons submitted to his commands (Mark 1:27). What is more, angels, who themselves refused to be worshiped in the Bible (see Rev. 22:8–9), are presented as worshiping Christ. In an unmistakably lucid affirmation the book of Hebrews says, "For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'?" And yet "when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let *all* God's angels worship him'" (1:5–6; emphasis added). What could be more emphatic? Christ is not an angel but the unique Son of God, and *all* the angels must worship him.

The Proclamation of Jesus's Deity by the "Voice of God." Three times a voice from heaven (taken to be the voice of God by Jesus's followers) proclaimed Christ's deity. At his baptism the voice said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). Later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the voice proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him" (Matt. 17:5). Later, Jesus said, "'Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again'" (John 12:28). This was followed by another implicit deity claim by Christ (vv. 31–36).

Angels' Proclamation of Jesus's Deity. Before his birth the angel Gabriel declared, "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High" (Luke 1:32). Later, he also said, "The holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35 NIV). After his birth an angel told the shepherds, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

A Demon's Acknowledgment of Jesus's Deity. We know from James that even demons believe that there is "one God" (James 2:19). From the Gospels we learn that demons also confess that Jesus is the Son of God. One said, "What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?" (Matt. 8:29).

Whether this view of Christ is correct or not, there should be no doubt that it is what the disciples of Christ taught. Indeed, as was already shown, it is what Jesus thought of himself. He claimed to be all that God is, and his disciples believed it.

Evidence in Non-Christian Writers of the Early Christian Era That the Disciples Believed Christ Was God

When we read carefully the non-Christian testimony to Jesus of Nazareth, we can see strong hints that his earliest disciples believed that he was God.

Josephus (ca. 37/38–100)

Josephus was a first-century Jewish historian and contemporary of Jesus who wrote of "the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ" (*Antiquities* 20.9.1). He added, "They reported that he had appeared to them three days after His crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly, He was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders" (18.33, Arabic text). But words like "Christ" and "Messiah" were understood by Jewish Scripture to refer to deity (see above).

Lucian (ca. 120–180)

This second-century Greek satirist said Christ was "the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world. . . . Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they were all brothers one of another after they have transgressed once for all by *denying the Greek gods and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself* and living under his laws" (*On the Death of Peregrine* 13.15, emphasis added). Clearly he acknowledges that Jesus's early disciples denied polytheism and worshiped Christ as God.

Suetonius (ca. AD 120)

This second-century Roman historian hints that Christ was considered God by his early disciples. "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [another spelling of *Christus* or *Christ*], he [Emperor Claudius] expelled them from Rome." Elsewhere, in the *Lives of the Caesars* (26.2), Suetonius wrote: "Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to *a new and mischievous superstition*" (a possible indirect allusion to their deity claims for Jesus; emphasis added).

Pliny the Younger (ca. AD 112)

Pliny spoke of killing Christians, whom he attempted to induce to "curse Christ, which a genuine Christian cannot be induced to do." In the same letter (*Epistles* 10.96) he wrote of Christians: "They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when *they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god*, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to do any wicked deeds, and never to deny a truth when they should be called upon to deliver it up" (emphasis added). This clearly indicates they believed Jesus was God.

Thallus (ca. AD 52)

Julius Africanus (ca. AD 221) said, "Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness [at the time of the crucifixion] as an eclipse of the sun—unreasonably, as it seems to me. It was unreasonable, of course, because a solar eclipse could not take place at the time of the full moon, and it was the time of the paschal full moon when *Christ* died" (emphasis added). Here again, both the surrounding wonders and the deity term "Christ" reveal the disciples' belief in Jesus's deity.

Letter of Mara Bar-Serapion (after AD 73)

This letter by a father to his son in prison, held by the British Museum, only hints at deity claims for Christ in the phrase "the wise King," a title that the Jewish Scriptures used to refer to the Christ,

whom those Scriptures also expected to be God (see above, under "Jesus's Claim to Be the Messiah-God"). The letter says, "What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? It was just after that their kingdom was abolished. . . . But Socrates did not die for good; he lived on in the teaching of Plato. Pythagoras did not die for good; he lived on in the statue of Hera. Nor did *the wise King* [Jesus] die for good; he lived on in the teaching which he had given" (emphasis added).[685]

Summary and Conclusion

The New Testament documents are historically reliable (see chap. 18). That means when they say Jesus said something, Jesus actually said it, not necessarily in those exact words (after all, he probably spoke in Aramaic, and the New Testament was written in Greek), but in words with substantially the same meaning.

After reviewing these historically reliable documents for what Jesus actually taught concerning his own origin and nature, we find both indirect implications and explicit statements that Jesus claimed to be God Almighty, the Creator of the universe in human flesh. In John's immortal words, "In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14).

In view of this, we are left with a trilemma. As C. S. Lewis forcefully put it:

> I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish things that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell.[686]

This will be discussed in the next chapter.

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20
The Evidence for the Deity and Authority of Jesus Christ

In our defense of the Christian faith, we have shown the following: (1) truth is knowable (chaps. 1–8a); (2) the opposite of true is false (chap. 8b); (3) in opposition to all other views of God (chaps. 9–14), a theistic God exists (chap. 15); (4) in a theistic world, miracles are possible (chap. 16a); (5) miracles can be used to confirm a truth claim within a theistic worldview (chap. 16b); (6) the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chaps. 17–18); (7) those documents report that Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh (chap. 19). Now we will show that (8) those documents provide multiple lines of miraculous evidence that Jesus is God, as he claimed to be.

Up to this point we know only that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God—the theistic God, the one and only true God (chap. 15). It remains now to look at the evidence for this claim. As we learned earlier, in chapter 16, miracles are a special act of God and can be used to confirm a message from God by the one performing them.

What we will see in this chapter is a convergence of three sets of miracles to confirm that Christ is God, as he claimed to be: (1) a fulfillment of supernatural prophecy, (2) a sinless and miraculous life, and (3) a miraculous resurrection from the dead. Being unparalleled and unprecedented, these unique miracles converge to confirm Jesus to be God. Now let's examine the evidence.

Jesus's Unique Fulfillment of Prophecy as Evidence of His Deity

The logic of the argument here is this: a miracle is an act of God that confirms the truth of God associated with it. Miracles associated with Christ's claim to be God are acts of God that confirm him to be the Son of God (chap. 16). And in Jesus's case there is a convergence of three great miraculous happenings—prophecy, his sinless life and miraculous deeds, and his resurrection—that lead forthrightly to the conclusion that he alone is the unique Son of God.

Typical but Not Predictive Prophecy

Not all Old Testament statements applied to Christ in the New Testament were truly predictive. Such statements include the following: (1) that he would teach in parables (Ps. 78:2; cf. Matt. 13:34); (2) that babies would be slaughtered at the time of his birth (Jer. 31:15; cf. Matt. 2:16–18); (3) that he would be betrayed by Judas (Ps. 41:9; cf. Matt. 10:4; John 13:18); (4) that he would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12; cf. Matt. 26:15); (5) that he would suffer thirst on the cross (Ps. 69:21; cf. John 19:28); (6) that he would flee to Egypt and return (Hosea 11:1; cf. Matt. 2:15); and so on. These were not clearly predictive, as meant by the Old Testament writer and understood in their Old Testament context. Some call these typical (rather than predictive) prophecies since, as used by the

New Testament writers, they typify what Christ would do, and he "fulfilled" them in the sense of bringing some truth in them to "the full"—that is, to its highest expression—in what he said or did. Because statements like these are not clearly predictive as understood in advance in their Old Testament context, we will not use them here as part of our argument.

Numerous Predictive Prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament

In addition to the typological statements applied to Christ that were not truly predictive, there are many Old Testament prophecies that are best understood as applying to the Messiah; many of these do not make good sense in any other way. In this latter category we will single out the most significant predictive prophecies that Christ fulfilled.

1. The Messiah will be born of a woman (Gen. 3:15; cf. Gal. 4:4).
2. He will be of the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 22:18; cf. Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16).
3. He will come from the line of Isaac (Gen. 17:19; 21:12; cf. Matt. 1:2; Heb. 11:17–19).
4. He will be a descendant of Jacob (Num. 24:17; cf. Luke 3:34).
5. He will be of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; cf. Luke 3:23–33; Heb. 7:14).
6. He will be of the line of Jesse (Isa. 11:1; cf. Luke 3:32).
7. He will be of the house of David (2 Sam. 7:12; Jer. 23:5; cf. Matt. 1:1).
8. His birthplace will be Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; cf. Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:4–6).
9. He will be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; cf. Matt. 1:21–23).
10. He will be anointed by the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2; cf. Matt. 3:16–17).
11. He will be heralded by a messenger of the Lord (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; cf. Matt. 3:1–2).
12. He will be a prophet to his people (Deut. 18:15–18; cf. Acts 3:22–23).
13. He will be a priest (Ps. 110:4; cf. Heb. 5:6–10).
14. He will be a king (Ps. 2:6; cf. Matt. 21:5).
15. He will have a ministry of miracles (Isa. 35:5–6; cf. Matt. 9:35).
16. He will minister in Galilee (Isa. 9:1–2; cf. Matt. 4:12–16).
17. He will be a light to the gentiles (Isa. 60:3; cf. Acts 13:47–48).
18. He will cleanse the temple (Mal. 3:1; cf. Matt. 21:12).
19. He will be rejected by the Jewish people (Ps. 118:22; cf. 1 Pet. 2:7).
20. He will die some 483 years after 444 BC (Dan. 9:24–25).[687]
21. He will die a humiliating death (Isa. 53; cf. Matt. 27).
22. He will be rejected by his own people (Isa. 53:3; cf. John 1:10–11; 7:5, 48).
23. He will be silent before his accusers (Isa. 53:7; cf. Matt. 27:12–19).
24. He will be mocked (Ps. 22:7–8; cf. Matt. 27:31).
25. He will be pierced (Zech. 12:10; cf. John 19:34).
26. He will die with thieves (Isa. 53:12; cf. Matt. 27:38).
27. He will pray for his persecutors (Isa. 53:12; cf. Luke 23:34).
28. He will be forsaken by his disciples (Zech. 13:7; cf. Mark 14:50).
29. He will be buried in a rich man's tomb (Isa. 53:9; cf. Matt. 27:57–60).

30. He will rise from the dead (Ps. 2:7; 16:10; cf. Acts 2:31; 13:33; Mark 16:6).
31. He will ascend into heaven (Ps. 68:18; cf. Acts 1:9–10).
32. He will sit at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1; cf. Heb. 1:3, 13).

The Uniqueness of Predictive Prophecy about Christ

What is truly amazing about these Old Testament predictions is that there is no way that the predictions contained here could be made by "intelligent guesses" or by reading the "trend of the times" or even by "reading minds," methods used by some present-day prognosticators. Even the most liberal critic of the Old Testament admits that most of the Old Testament books were completed hundreds of years before Christ, and even the book of Daniel by about 167 BC.[688] What difference does it make if a prophecy is given only two hundred years in advance rather than six hundred years? Can one with less than divine power make multiple predictions such as these four hundred years in advance but not six hundred years ahead? And in the context of a theistic universe, when there are dozens of these prophecies converging in the lifetime of one person, it becomes nothing less than miraculous.

The Word of God is confirmed by an act of God. As the writer of Hebrews states, "God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit" (2:4). If in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who claimed fulfillment of these predictions about the Messiah made hundreds of years before, there came to pass all that had been prophesied of him, then we must conclude that he indeed is the Messiah. In short, if Jesus fulfilled the prophecies about the coming Messiah, this fulfillment must be an act of God showing him to be the Son of God.

Miraculous Earmarks of Old Testament Predictions about Christ

All of the earmarks of a miracle surround Jesus's fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.[689] These were spelled out in chapter 16 as (1) unusualness, (2) immediateness, (3) purposefulness, and (4) moral goodness. All of these apply to fulfilled prophecy.

Unusualness of Fulfilled Prophecy. Mathematicians have confirmed the improbability of fulfilled prophecy. Noted mathematician Marvin Bittinger has sold over twelve million college math texts. He estimated that the probability of nine prophecies coming true of Christ is 1/10 to the 76th power. Just 1/10 to the 17th power is like finding one particular grain of sand in a domed football stadium filled with sand. And 1/10 to the 76th power is like picking the same grain of sand four times in succession. To say the least, that is highly improbable.[690]

Immediateness of Fulfilled Prophecy. This characteristic of a fulfilled prophecy does not apply to prophecy in the same way it does to gospel miracles such as immediate healing or resurrections. Rather, the miraculous element was in the fact that they foresaw the future with accuracy. Like other miracles, a fulfilled prophecy confirms the prophetic claim made with it. Jesus said, "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he" (John 13:19). Isaiah declared that only God could make supernatural predictions about the future: "Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'" (Isa. 46:9–10). In short, in a theistic world fulfilled prophecy confirms the supernatural source of the prediction. What is more, some of

the fulfilled prophecies were miracles, both miracles done by him and ones that happened to him, such as the virgin birth and his bodily resurrection.

Purposefulness of Fulfilled Prophecy. Jesus's coming clearly had a purpose. He said, "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He added, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). At his baptism he declared, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). And in Luke he affirmed, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (19:10).

Predictive prophecy, like other miracles, had as one of its purposes the confirmation of the truth claim connected with it. Hebrews declared: "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will" (2:3–4). Likewise, a fulfilled prediction is a confirmation of the supernatural source of the prediction (Isa. 46:8–10; John 13:19). And the proving false of a prediction is a sign that it is not of God (Deut. 18:22).

Moral Goodness in Fulfilled Prophecy. Another characteristic of a supernatural prediction from a morally perfect God is that it will befit his nature. And the good of providing redemption for the whole world that came with the fulfillment of messianic prophecies is the greatest good one can imagine (John 3:16). Indeed, the moral character of Christ, who fulfilled them, is the greatest moral example the world has ever seen (see below). This is implied in the statement that a miracle will bring "glory" to God (John 11:40–42); that is, it will magnify his metaphysical and/or moral nature.

In short, the numerous predictive prophecies about Christ are a supernatural confirmation of who he claimed to be—namely, God in human flesh. These alone, apart from the many miracles that Christ performed, would sufficiently confirm his deity. But there is more—much more.

Responses to Some Objections to the Argument from Prophecy

Since many biblical critics have objected to anything supernatural, it is understandable that they would object to the foregoing argument. Let's briefly respond to their complaints.

The Objection That Supernatural Events Are Not Credible

The objection to miracles in general has already been treated. This is a theistic universe (see chap. 15), and if God exists, then miracles are possible. The standard arguments against miracles have been tried and found wanting (chap. 16). The only way to exclude the possibility of miracles is to disprove the existence of God. Few have attempted this, and no one has succeeded in logically disproving God's existence. But as long as it is possible for God to exist, it is possible for miracles to occur.

The Objection That Jesus Manipulated Events to "Fulfill" Prophecies

This hypothesis is that Jesus was a messianic pretender who tried to manage events to make it look like he had fulfilled the Old Testament predictions about the Messiah. However, the facts do not support this theory, put forward by Schonfield's *The Passover Plot*.[691] As it turns out, this view is nothing but a speculative thesis that weaves together circumstantial evidence on the loom of the author's own imagination. This hypothesis must be rejected for several reasons.

First, this view does not fit the known unimpeachable character of Christ (see below). He was anything but cunning and deceptive; he was open and honest.

Second, such a plot to prove that he was the Messiah would not have been morally "innocent."[692] It would have been a deliberate deception of worldwide messianic importance. The thesis, if proved true, would make Christ out to be a major liar and not even a good man.

Third, the alleged plot to prove Christ was the Messiah does not fit with the facts known about Jesus's closest disciples. How was it that Jesus could hide from his most intimate friends this intricate plot while allegedly confiding only in the young man Lazarus and in Joseph of Arimathea? It is implausible that Jesus would pick these men for such a plot to feign death by drugs and pretend to rise again. And the honest and even skeptical character of his disciples is incongruous with the inclusion of them in the alleged plot.

Fourth, even assuming that Jesus could have cleverly contrived this plan while concealing it from his closest disciples, how can we explain his sinless and miraculous life (discussed below)? As the Jews said in John 9:16, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs [as opening the eyes of the blind]?"

Finally, the messianic-pretender hypothesis is rendered implausible by the nature of many of the prophecies themselves. There are many prophecies over which Jesus had absolutely no control, including when (Dan. 9), where (Mic. 5:2), how (Isa. 7:14), and from what tribe (Gen. 49:10) or dynasty (2 Sam. 7; Jer. 23:5) he would be born. Nor is it plausible to suppose that Jesus could have staged or manipulated the reactions of others to himself, including John's heralding (Matt. 3), his accusers' reactions (Matt. 27:12), how he would suffer, and how they would pierce his side with a spear (John 19:34).

Indeed, even Schonfield admits that Jesus's plot failed when the Romans actually pierced him on the cross. The facts of the matter are that there are many prophecies that Jesus fulfilled over which he had no control and others over which he had virtually no influence. To believe that Jesus possessed the superhuman manipulative powers needed to bring about the apparent fulfillment of the Old Testament predictions about the Messiah in his life takes an even bigger miracle than the miracles actually recorded by the Gospels.

The Objection That These Prophecies Just Accidentally Converged in Jesus's Life

First of all, as noted above, this is highly improbable, with the odds being 1/10 to the 76th power for just nine predictions. And, according to the *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, by J. Barton Payne, nearly a hundred predictions of Christ's first coming were made in the Old Testament.[693]

Second, in a theistic world, such as this one is known to be (see chap. 15), events predicted in God's name with all the earmarks of a miracle do not happen by chance. God is in control of the course of events, and when God makes predictions hundreds of years in advance about his plan of salvation for the world, an accidental "fulfillment" will not happen. It is virtually inconceivable that God would allow either a total deception in his name or an accidental "fulfillment" in the life of the wrong person. Hence, on the already-established grounds that God exists, the chance fulfillment hypothesis is ruled out. An all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-perfect God will not allow anything to thwart his plans. Predictions made hundreds of years in advance in the name of the true and living theistic God cannot fail. This God cannot lie and cannot break a promise (Heb. 6:18), nor is it in accord with his nature that those desiring the truth can be totally deceived (Heb. 11:6; John 7:17).

The Objection That Psychics Have Made Unusual Predictions Rivaling Those in the Bible

It is sometimes claimed that psychics such as Nostradamus and Jeane Dixon have made amazing predictions like those in the Bible. Therefore, there is nothing unique about biblical prophecy. However, when we look for the supporting evidence for this claim, it cannot be found.

First, the psychics, even the best of them, make many false predictions. But a false prediction shows that they do not have a supernatural source (Deut. 18:22), for a supernatural, omniscient God, such as a theistic God is, cannot make false predictions. Indeed, in the Old Testament those who made such false predictions were stoned to death—a practice that, if it were seriously contemplated, would seriously diminish the number of those making predictions they were very sure came from God.

Although a few seemingly inexplicable prognostications of psychics have come to pass, on examination it was discovered that they did not occur. For example, Nostradamus is alleged to have predicted a great earthquake in California for May 10, 1981. This was reported on May 6, 1981, in *USA Today*. However, no such quake occurred. As a matter of fact, Nostradamus mentioned no country, city, or year. He spoke only of a "rumbling earth" in a "new city" and a "very mighty quake" on May 10 (no year). Anyone can make a prediction like that.

Nostradamus scholar Andre Lamont claims that Nostradamus gave "a prophecy of the coming of Hitler and Nazism in a world divided within itself."[694] However, Hitler is not mentioned by Nostradamus, and the prediction gives no date and is vague. It reads: "Followers of sects, great troubles are in store for the Messenger. A beast upon the theater prepares the scenical play. The inventor of that wicked feat will be famous. By sects the world will be confused and divided."[695] In this context there is a reference to "Hister" (not Hitler) by Nostradamus (C4Q68), which is obviously a place, not a person. The attempt to read back into this both his name and his birthplace is stretched. What is more, Hitler grew up in Linz, Austria, not in any place called Hister. There is nothing supernatural about this so-called prophecy.

Likewise, Jeane Dixon is supposed to have predicted President John F. Kennedy's assassination. However, she never mentioned his name but merely said that a Democrat (that's a 50 percent chance) would die in office (based on a twenty-year cycle of presidents dying in office, which was broken by President Reagan). Sooner or later, just by guessing anyone is bound to get some right.

Second, the psychics have a high percent of error, even on short-term (one-year) predictions. Here are only a few of the false prognostications made by psychics about the next year. In 1976 *The People's Almanac* got 66 of 72 predictions wrong (92 percent). In 1993 the same publication missed every major unexpected story: Michael Jordan's retirement, the Midwest flood, the Israel-PLO peace treaty. Some failed psychic predictions in 1994: queen of England would abdicate; Hillary Clinton would plead guilty of shoplifting; an African plant would cure AIDS; a volcanic action would make a land bridge to Cuba; the Sears Tower would lean like the tower of Pisa; a national lottery would cut taxes in half; a teenager would build and detonate a nuclear bomb in South Carolina. One of the most outstanding psychic prediction failures was that Jacqueline Kennedy would not remarry after the death of her husband, President Kennedy—she married Aristotle Onassis the day after the prediction was made!

Actually, there is no real comparison between psychic prognostications and the predictions made in the Bible, as the following chart illustrates:

Bible Predictions about the Distant Future	Psychic Predictions about the New Year

Made hundreds of years in advance	Made one year in advance
100 percent correct	Sometimes 90-plus percent wrong
Usually clear and definite	Often vague and ambiguous

Many psychic predictions are vague and mystical. They could be taken in different ways—leaving open the possibility that something in the future may fit it. Nostradamus was notorious for these kinds of "predictions."[696] The Bible, by contrast, made many clear and specific predictions (see list above). For example, it foretold by name the city in which Christ would be born (Mic. 5:2), the ancestors from whom he would come (Gen. 12; 17; 2 Sam. 7), the manner in which he would suffer (Isa. 53), and the year in which he would die (Dan. 9). It also made clear predictions about nations (such as Israel, Egypt, and Babylon) made many years in advance that have been literally fulfilled.[697]

Further, not a single prediction about Christ's first coming has gone unfulfilled. The Bible was 100 percent right on all of these. André Kole,[698] famous illusionist, showed that the psychic predictions for one year were 92 percent wrong (see above). Another year they missed every major testable prediction—0 percent right. Clearly, there is no real comparison here between biblical and psychic predictions.

Jesus's Sinless and Miraculous Life as Evidence of His Deity

We turn now to the second area of miracles that confirm the claims of Christ to be God: his sinless and miraculous life. Now, simply living a sinless life, as difficult as that would be, would not necessarily prove someone is God. However, if someone both claims to be God and offers a sinless life as evidence, that is an entirely different matter. All humans are sinners; God knows it and so do we. If a person lives a morally spotless life and offers as the truth about himself that he is God incarnated, we must at least take his claim seriously. Some dare to claim perfection, but few thinking persons take these claimants seriously, least of all those who know them best. With Jesus it is quite different; those who knew him best thought the most highly of him.

The Testimony of Those Who Knew Jesus Best

Here, from the historically reliable New Testament documents (see chap. 18), is a synopsis of those who were close to Jesus. Indeed, some had spent three and a half years working with him, day and night. They saw him in every major situation one can have, from a wedding to a funeral, with children and adults, with friends and with enemies. And here is what they had to say about his character.

The apostle Peter: "Christ [is] a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet. 1:19 NIV). "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22 NIV). "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous" (1 Pet. 3:18 RSV).

The apostle John: "He is righteous" (1 John 2:29). "He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

The apostle Paul: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21 NIV).

The writer of Hebrews: "For we . . . have [a high priest] who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin" (Heb. 4:15 NIV). He is "holy, innocent, unstained, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). "Christ . . . offered himself without blemish to God" (Heb. 9:14).

The Testimony of Jesus's Enemies

To receive good words from one's friends is one thing, but the testimony of one's enemies is another. Adversarial witnesses have special weight in a court of law. Consider what Jesus's enemies said:

Judas: "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4).
Pilate: "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person" (Matt. 27:24 NKJV).
Pilate's Wife: "Have nothing to do with that just Man" (Matt. 27:19 NKJV).
A centurion: "Certainly this was a righteous Man" (Luke 23:47 NKJV).
A centurion: "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54).
The thief on the cross: "This man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41).
The Herodians: "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth: nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men" (Matt. 22:16 NKJV).

The Accusations against Christ in His Day

There were, of course, accusations against Christ in his day. However, none of them were substantiated as negative to his character. Let's consider them briefly:

The Romans: He claimed to be "King of the Jews" (John 19:19). This is true but not damaging since he was their king (Luke 23:3), albeit a rejected one (John 1:10–11).

The Pharisees: "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Matt. 12:24 NKJV). This is an unjust and exaggerated criticism resulting from his healing a demon-possessed, mute, and blind man. Further, it is a tacit admission of his miraculous ability.

Passersby at the cross: "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days" (Mark 15:29). This was based on a misunderstanding of what Jesus actually meant, which was a reference to his death and resurrection (John 2:19–21).

The high priest and Sanhedrin: "'You have heard the blasphemy [that He claims to be the Christ, the Son of God]! What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death" (Mark 14:64 NKJV). But this begs the question, for he offered evidence that he was the Son of God. And if he was, then it was not blasphemy to claim to be.

A crowd: "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King" (Luke 23:2 NKJV). This is unfounded on both counts. He was a King, and he did pay taxes (Matt. 17:27) and urged others to do the same (Matt. 22:15–22).

Some Accusations against Christ since His Day

Even those who don't accept Christ's deity usually admire his morality. It is well known, for example, that the great Hindu leader Mahatma Gandhi greatly admired Jesus, particularly his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Nonetheless, some unbelievers level bitter attacks on Christ's character. The British agnostic Bertrand Russell, for example, in his famous booklet *Why I Am Not a Christian*, critiques Christ's character as follows.

Objection from Jesus's Warning about Hell. Russell argues that anyone who threatens people with eternal hell lacks proper kindness. Jesus warned people about hell. Hence, he lacked proper kindness.

Response. This criticism begs the question. If there is a hell, then anyone who does not warn people about it lacks proper kindness! After all, a person who knows the building is on fire and does not warn the people in it lacks proper kindness. Jesus said there is a hell (Matt. 5:29–30; 25:41; Luke 16:19–31). And if he is the Son of God, then he ought to know. Hence, he was eminently kind to warn people of it.

Objection from Jesus's Alleged Vindictiveness. Russell argues that Jesus was vindictive. Jesus declared: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. . . . You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" (Matt. 23:27, 33). This, Russell claims, was clear evidence of Jesus's vindictiveness.

Response. Denouncing evil is not vindictive; otherwise all police officers and judges would be vindictive by their very position. Anyone who does not condemn evil and hypocrisy, as Jesus did, is morally flawed. Jesus was not vindictive. He taught us to love our enemies (Matt. 5:44), and he himself forgave his crucifiers (Luke 23:34). Nothing was more contrary to vindictiveness than that.

Objection from Jesus's Unnecessarily Drowning Pigs. Again, Russell attacks Jesus's character by claiming that anyone who unnecessarily drowns pigs is unkind. But Jesus did this (in Matt. 8:30–32) when the demons Jesus cast out drove a whole herd of pigs off the hill.

Response. First of all, Jesus did not drown the pigs. He simply cast the demons out of a man, and the demons drove the pigs to their destruction. Jesus was more interested in saving people than pigs. Further, as Creator he owns all things and has the right to take their life (Deut. 32:39; Job 1:21). Indeed, we sacrifice pigs for the good of humans every time we have a barbeque or eat ham and eggs. Jesus himself ate the sacrificial lamb at Passover time.

Objection from Jesus's Getting Angry. Russell finds fault with Jesus for his anger at the money changers in the temple and his driving them out (Mark 11:15–19).

Response. Anger is not necessarily sinful. God himself demonstrated righteous indignation (Exod. 4:14; Num. 12:9; Ps. 2:5). Paul said, "Be angry but do not sin" (Eph. 4:26 RSV, quoting Ps. 4:4).

Jesus was justly angry at those who had profaned the temple of God. The failure to be angry at intolerance, rape, murder, and genocide is a failure in character, not a flaw in it.

Objection from Cursing the Fig Tree. Jesus also revealed a flaw in his character, Russell says, by getting angry and cursing a fig tree simply because it had no fruit (Matt. 21:19).

Response. As just noted, anger is not necessarily sinful. God is angry at sin and so should we be. Furthermore, Jesus was not responding in anger. The fig tree was a symbol of Israel, and Jesus used it as a dramatic visual aid to warn Israel of their coming judgment for rejecting their King. His point was to condemn the outward appearance of being godly without any real fruitfulness.

The Evidence of the High Moral Character of Christ

Contrary to Muhammad, who admitted his sinfulness and prayed for forgiveness (Sura 47:19), and Buddha, who deserted his wife and family and never returned, and Mahatma Gandhi, who engaged in racial/religious wars in South Africa,[699] Jesus taught and lived the highest ethic known to humanity in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7). This included such venerable moral principles as the Golden Rule (7:12); do not judge others (7:1); love your enemies (5:44); do not retaliate (5:38–39); do not be a hypocrite (7:5); do not lust in your heart (5:27–28); be merciful (5:7); keep your word (5:37); help the poor (6:3–4); forgive others (6:12); do not make money your God (6:24). He also taught his followers to love little children (Mark 10:13–14).

Further, the character of Christ is manifested in his actions: he wept over the death of a friend (John 11:35); he set the example of servanthood by washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1–11); he lived a life of poverty (Matt. 8:20); he expressed compassion for those who rejected him (Matt. 23:37); he healed the ear of one who came with the mob to crucify him (Luke 22:51); he chose and loved a man he knew would betray him (Matt. 10:4; John 17:12); he never spoke in his own defense, even against false accusations (Matt. 27:12–14); he died for his enemies (Rom. 5:8–10); he forgave his crucifiers (Luke 23:34). No greater moral example is known to have ever lived than Jesus.[700]

The Confirmation of Jesus's Deity by Miracles

Jesus's life was not only sinless; it was also miraculous from the beginning. He was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18–25; cf. Luke 2:26–35; 2:1–7); he turned water into wine (John 2:7–11); walked on water (Matt. 14:25); multiplied bread (John 6:11–14); opened the eyes of the blind (John 9:1–7); made the lame walk (Mark 2:3–12); cast out demons (Mark 3:11); healed the multitudes of all kinds of sickness (Matt. 9:35); and even raised the dead to life again on several occasions (see John 11:1–44).

When asked whether he was the Messiah, he offered his miracles as evidence, saying, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up" (Matt. 11:4–5). Miracles of these kinds were accepted by the Jews of Jesus's day as an evident sign of divine favor on the person performing them. And the special outpouring of messianic miracles was proof that the performer was the Messiah (see Isa. 35:5–6). Even the Jews who knew Jesus had healed the blind man asked, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" (John 9:16).

The ruler Nicodemus stated the Jewish position well when he acknowledged to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). To a first-century monotheistic Jew, miracles such as Christ performed were an obvious indication of divine approval. But in Christ's case divine approval is an evidence of Christ's deity. Just as the voice from heaven at Jesus's baptism pronounced him to be God's unique Son (Matt. 3:16–17), so the outpouring of messianic miracles coupled with the claims of Christ to be Yahweh-Messiah are unmistakable evidence of his true deity. An act of God verifies the message of God given through the one performing the act. And in Christ's case the message was "I am God; here are the acts of God to prove it."

Jesus challenged his accusers: "Which one of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46). The verdict of history is "No one!" Even Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian and close contemporary of Christ, wrote: "At this time there was a wise man named Jesus. His conduct was good and [he] was known to be virtuous."[701] In the classic work *The Character of Jesus*, Horace Bushnell sums up the uniqueness of Christ's character well: "If Christ was a merely natural man, then was he under all the conditions public and private, as regards the security of his virtue, that we have discovered in man. . . . We can believe any miracle more easily than that Christ was a man, and yet a perfect character, such as here is given." He adds, "Being a miracle himself, it would be the greatest miracle of all miracles if he did not work miracles."[702] Indeed, it is to Christ's greatest miracle that we turn now.

Jesus's Resurrection as Evidence of His Deity

There is a third miracle or special act of God confirming Christ's claim to deity: his resurrection from the dead. This is truly the grand miracle and the greatest of them all. The fact that both the Old Testament and Jesus predicted in advance that he would rise from the dead makes the miracle even that much stronger. Since we have already given the evidence for the reliability of the New Testament eyewitnesses to the events recorded in the Bible (see chap. 18), it will be necessary here to examine only the testimony itself.

Predictions of Jesus's Resurrection by Both Old Testament Prophets and Jesus

A Jewish monotheist believed that only God can give life (Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6), and only God could resurrect the dead (cf. Ezek. 37; Dan. 12). The Egyptian magicians duplicated Moses's wonders until Moses was used by God to turn dust into living gnats, at which miracle they exclaimed, "This is the finger of God" (Exod. 8:19). Only God can create life, and only God can bring people back to life, they believed. Hence, in this monotheistic context the most convincing evidence of God is a resurrection from the dead.

What makes Jesus's resurrection even more amazing is that it was predicted in advance both in the Old Testament and by Jesus. There are two lines of Old Testament argument for the resurrection. First, there are the passages, such as Psalms 2 and 16, that are cited by the New Testament as applying to the resurrection of Christ (cf. Acts 2:27–28; Heb. 1:5). It was no doubt passages such as these that Paul used in Jewish synagogues as "he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead" (Acts 17:2–3). Second, the resurrection of Christ is taught by logical deduction from two Old Testament teachings: (1) the Messiah will come and *die* (cf. Isa. 53; Dan. 9:26), and (2) the Messiah will have an enduring political *reign* from Jerusalem (Isa. 9:6; Dan. 2:44; Zech. 13:1). The only way one and the same Messiah can actually fulfill these two lines of prophecy is by a resurrection from the dead. Jesus died before he could ever begin a reign. Only a resurrection could make the royal prophecies realizable.

On top of these Old Testament predictions of Christ's resurrection are those he made on several occasions himself. According to John, Jesus predicted his resurrection from his earliest ministry, saying, "Destroy this temple [of my body], and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19, 21). Even in the synoptic Gospels Jesus said, as early as Matthew 12:40, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." After Peter's confession Jesus "began to teach them [his disciples] that the Son of man must suffer many things . . . and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Jesus repeated this same prediction again on the way to Jerusalem and the cross (cf. Mark 9:31; 10:34; 14:62; Matt. 27:63). Further, Jesus said he would raise himself from the dead: "I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (John 10:18).

Now in view of the predictions of the resurrection, the event is given special confirming significance. Karl Popper argued that whenever a "risky prediction" is fulfilled, it counts as confirmation of the hypothesis that comes with it.[703] If so, what could be a riskier prediction than a resurrection, and hence, what could have greater confirmational force than the resurrection of Christ? Anyone who would not accept a predicted resurrection as evidence of a truth claim has an unfalsifiable bias against the truth (cf. Luke 16:31). Even the great skeptic David Hume admitted that "it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life."[704]

Conclusive Evidence That Jesus Actually Died on the Cross and Was Buried in Joseph's Tomb

Before it can be established that Jesus really rose from the grave it must be established that he actually died. The Qur'an declares that Jesus did not die on the cross but that he only appeared to die (Sura 4:157). Some skeptics have adopted a "swoon theory," wherein Jesus appeared dead but was revived later in the tomb. Along with this can be categorized the "drug" hypothesis, that Jesus was only doped and appeared dead, and recovered later.

Against any such view that Christ did not really die the following evidence can be offered.

1. Jesus refused to take the common pain-killing drug offered to crucifixion victims (Mark 15:23). He was later given only a small nonintoxicating amount of some cheap wine to quench his thirst (Mark 15:36). There is no evidence that Jesus was drugged; both the obvious agony and death cry do not bespeak a man who is drugged.

2. The heavy loss of blood indicates Jesus was dead. He had five wounds and was on the cross from nine in the morning (cf. Mark 15:25) until just before sunset (Mark 15:42).

3. Jesus was heard to have uttered a death cry by those standing by (John 19:30).

4. When he was pierced in the side by the soldiers, "blood and water" flowed out (John 19:34); this is an indisputable medical sign of death, indicating that the red and white blood corpuscles had separated.[705]

5. The experienced Roman soldiers examined Jesus and pronounced him dead without even breaking his legs to hasten death as was their usual practice (John 19:33).

6. Jesus was hurriedly embalmed in about seventy-five pounds of spices and bandages and laid in a guarded tomb (John 19:39–40). Even if he had resuscitated, he could not have rolled back the heavy stone, overcome the guards, and escaped (Matt. 27:60).

7. Further, Pilate inquired to make sure that Jesus was dead before he gave the body to Joseph of Arimathea for burial.

8. After all this, if Jesus were somehow miraculously still alive, his appearances would have been more those of a resuscitated wretch than of a resurrected and triumphant Savior. It would scarcely have transformed the disciples, led to the conversion of thousands a few weeks later, or ultimately turned the world upside down.

9. The undisturbed appearance of the graveclothes—apparently like an empty cocoon (John 20:7)—is further indication that he was dead. Otherwise, why were the graveclothes undisturbed if there had not been a miraculous rising through them? If it was a mere physical resuscitation or revival of a swooned or drugged body, then Christ would have had to break out of the graveclothes. But since he simply rose through them, it would indicate that he was really dead and rose to a glorified body that could move through graveclothes as it could walk through closed doors (John 20:19). The article on the death of Christ in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded:

> Modern medical authorities have confirmed that Jesus actually died on the cross. Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right ribs, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge.[706]

The cumulative weight of the above evidence, particularly the firm medical evidence of "blood and water," places the evidence for Christ's death beyond the shadow of a doubt. There is more evidence that Jesus died than there is that most important people from the ancient world ever lived.

The Evidence That Jesus Rose Bodily from the Dead

The evidence that Christ rose bodily from the dead is found in the nature and extent of the visitations to his empty tomb and the twelve appearances of the bodily resurrected Christ during a forty-day period, during which he was seen, heard, and touched with the physical senses; ate physical food on four occasions; instructed his disciples on the kingdom of God; performing miracles; and transforming scared, scattered, and skeptical disciples into the world's greatest missionary society of fearless martyrs of the Christian faith. Consider first the order of events along with all the evidence provided.

Order of Post-Resurrection Events

People Involved	Evidence Provided
1. The women	Empty tomb, angel(s) (Matt. 28:1–7; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–11)
2. Peter and John	Empty tomb, graveclothes (John 20:3–10)
3. Mary Magdalene (#1)	Angels, heard, saw, touched (Mark 16:9–10; John 20:11–18)
4. Other women (#2)	Saw, heard, touched (Matt. 28:9–10)
5. Peter (#3)	Saw, heard* (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5)
6. Two disciples (#4)	Saw, heard, ate (Luke 24:13–31; Mark 16:12)
7. Ten disciples (#5)	Saw, heard, touched,* scars, ate (Mark. 16:14; Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–24; 1 Cor. 15:5)
8. Eleven disciples (Thomas present) (#6)	Saw, scars, heard, touched* (John 20:26–29)
9. Seven disciples by Sea of Galilee (#7)	Saw, heard, ate (John 21:1–23)
10. Five hundred disciples in Galilee (#8)	Saw, heard (1 Cor. 15:6)
11. All the apostles in Galilee (#9)	Saw, heard (1 Cor. 15:7; Matt. 28:18–20)
12. James (#10)	Saw, heard (1 Cor. 15:7)
13. All the apostles in Jerusalem (#11)	Saw, heard, ate (1 Cor. 15:7; Mark 16:15–20; Luke 24:46–52; Acts 1:3–9)
14. Paul (#12)	Saw, heard (Acts 9:1–8; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8)

*Implied

Now let's tally the evidence. (1) There were twelve different physical appearances of Christ on twelve different occasions to twelve different sets of people; (2) the empty tomb was seen on three occasions; (3) Jesus was seen and/or heard with the physical senses in all twelve appearances; (4) Jesus showed his crucifixion scars on two occasions; (5) he ate food during four appearances; (6) he was touched on two occasions and offered himself to be touched on two more; (7) witnesses saw Jesus's empty graveclothes on one occasion; (8) Jesus appeared to over five hundred people, including women and men, believers and unbelievers; (9) angels were seen on two occasions; (10) the first eleven appearances occurred during a forty-day period; (11) during this time Jesus taught his disciples concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3); (12) Jesus performed miracles during these appearances (John 21:1–14; Acts 1:3). *There was literally no other way available for Jesus to*

prove to his disciples that he had risen from the dead in the same body of flesh and bones in which he died!

The Physical Nature of the Resurrection Body

That Jesus was raised in the same physical body in which he died is demonstrated by the following facts recorded in the above-stated appearances:

1. The empty tomb shows that the same physical body placed in the tomb permanently vacated it alive three days later (Matt. 28:6).
2. Jesus said he was not a spirit but had real "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39). He was raised in the "flesh" (Acts 2:31).
3. His resurrection body had the crucifixion scars on it. Jesus revealed these to the disciples (Luke 24:39) and challenged Thomas to touch him (John 20:27).
4. Jesus ate physical food four times after the resurrection. He even offered this as proof he had a real physical body (Luke 24:30, 42–43; John 21:12–13; Acts 1:4).
5. Jesus's resurrection body was touched and handled. He was touched by Mary (John 20:17) and by the women (Matt. 28:9); he challenged the disciples (Luke 24:39) and Thomas to feel his wounds (John 20:27).
6. The resurrection body of Christ could be seen and heard with the physical senses. The body of Christ was seen after his resurrection with the naked eye (Matt. 28:17) and heard with natural ears (John 20:15–16).
7. The word for "body" (Gk. *soma*) always means a physical body in the New Testament when used of an individual human, and it is used of the resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:44). There are no exceptions to this rule.
8. Only bodies rise from the dead, not souls (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). The physical body of Christ died (not his soul). Thus it was this same physical body that rose again from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3–4).
9. The body "sown" in death is the same body that is raised in life. The same body "sown" at death is the one raised in immortality (1 Cor. 15:35–44).
10. Resurrection gives life to our mortal body; it does not replace it. Paul said, "He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom. 8:11).
11. The immortal is "put on" over our mortal body. This phrase implies there is no replacement of the physical body but merely an enhancement of it (1 Cor. 15:53).
12. The physical body is transformed, not destroyed. Christ "will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21 NKJV). The material body is not destroyed but is transformed into an immortal body.
13. Resurrection is "out from among" (Gk. *ek*) the dead. This phrase means Jesus was raised from the graveyard (Luke 24:46), where physical corpses are buried (cf. Acts 13:29–30).
14. We will recognize our loved ones in heaven. Paul comforts the believers with this anticipation (1 Thess. 4:13–18).

15. The resurrection body is physically recognizable. Jesus was recognized in his resurrection body like any other physical body would be recognized (Matt. 28:7, 17; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:24).
16. Jesus said it was the same body that dies. He said, "Destroy this temple [body], and three days later I will raise *it* [the same body] up" (John 2:19–22; emphasis added).
17. The fact that Jesus's body "did not see corruption" in the grave indicates it was the same body (Acts 2:31).
18. The stress on burial of the body (in preparation for the resurrection) reveals it is the same body that will be raised immortal (1 Cor. 15:3–4; Rom. 6:3–5; Col. 2:12).
19. The resurrection body is referred to as "flesh" (Gk. *sarx*) several times in the New Testament (Luke 24:39; Acts 2:31; 1 John 4:2–3; 2 John 7).[707]
20. The Greek word for "resurrection" (*anastasis*) means "a standing up again." This implies that it is the same body that lay down (in death) that is standing up again (in the resurrection).

The "changes" mentioned are not exchanges of the body for another body; rather, they are changes in the same body (1 Cor. 15:51). The change is from a mortal to an immortal body; it is not a change from a material to an immaterial body. We have the same body as when we were younger, yet there are changes in it. The changes are in secondary qualities, not primary ones. Or, to use traditional terminology, the changes are not in the substance of the body but in accidents that inhere in it.

A Harmony of the Postresurrection Order of Events

Some have challenged the consistency of all these accounts, but the variety in the accounts shows clearly that the various writers were not in collusion, and there is no demonstrable contradiction in the accounts. Put together,[708] the events can be understood consistently, as follows:

1. Early on Sunday morning after Jesus's crucifixion, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome went to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1, 10; John 20:1). Finding the tomb empty, Mary Magdalene ran to Peter and John to tell them someone had taken the body of Jesus (John 20:2).

2. The other women entered the tomb, where an angel (Matt. 28:5), who had a companion (John 20:11–12; Luke 24:4), told them Jesus had risen and would meet the disciples in Galilee (Matt. 28:2–8; Mark 16:5–8; Luke 24:4–8). On their hurried return in trembling and astonishment (Mark 16:8), yet with great joy (Matt. 28:8), they said nothing to anyone along the way (Mark 16:8), but went back to the disciples and reported what they had seen and heard (Matt. 28:8; Mark 16:10; Luke 24:9–10; John 20:2).

3. Meanwhile, after hearing Mary Magdalene's report, Peter and John ran to the tomb (John 20:3), apparently by a different and more direct route. John arrived at the tomb first (John 20:4). He peered into the tomb and saw the graveclothes but did not enter (John 20:5). When Peter arrived he entered the tomb and saw the graveclothes (John 20:6). Then John entered, saw the graveclothes and the folded head cloth in a place by itself, and believed (John 20:8). After this, they returned by the same route to the place the other disciples were staying (John 20:10) and so did not run into the women.

4. Arriving after Peter and John left, Mary Magdalene went into the tomb (for a second time) and saw the angels (John 20:13). *She also saw Jesus* [#1 appearance] and clung to him and worshiped him (John 20:11–17). She then returned to the disciples (John 20:18; Mark 16:10).

5. While the other women were on their way to the disciples, Jesus *appeared to them* [#2 appearance]. They took hold of his feet and worshiped him (Matt. 28:9–10). Jesus asked them to tell his disciples that he would meet them in Galilee (Matt. 28:10). Meanwhile the guards were bribed and told to say the disciples stole his body (Matt. 28:11–15).

6. When Mary and the women found the disciples, they announced that they had seen Jesus (Mark 16:10–11; Luke 24:10; John 20:18). After hearing this, Peter probably rushed to find Jesus, and *Peter saw him* [#3] that day (1 Cor. 15:5; cf. Luke 24:10, 34).

7. The same day Jesus *appeared to Cleopas and another unnamed disciple* [#4] (maybe Luke) on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13–31). He revealed himself to them while eating with them, and he told them he had appeared to Peter (Luke 24:34; cf. 1 Cor. 15:5). (Luke 24:34 may mean either that the two told the eleven that Jesus had appeared to Peter, or that when the two saw the eleven, the latter were saying, "The Lord has appeared to Peter.")

8. After Jesus left them they returned to Jerusalem, where Jesus *appeared to the ten disciples* [#5] (Thomas being absent; see John 20:24), showing his scars and eating fish (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:35–49; John 20:19–24).

9. After eight days, *Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples* [#6] (Thomas now present). He showed his wounds and challenged Thomas to believe. Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

10. *Jesus appeared to seven of his disciples* [#7] who had gone fishing in the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1). He ate breakfast with them (John 21:2–13), after which he restored Peter (21:15–19).

11. *Then he appeared to five hundred brethren* at one time [#8] (1 Cor. 15:6).

12. After this he *appeared to all the apostles* [#9] in Galilee and gave them the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20).

13. Then, *he appeared to James* [#10] (1 Cor. 15:7), probably in Jerusalem.

14. Later in Jerusalem, *he appeared to all his apostles* [#11] (1 Cor. 15:7), presenting many convincing evidences to them (Acts 1:3), including eating with them (Acts 1:4). He answered their last question (Acts 1:6–8) and then ascended into heaven (Mark 16:15–20; Luke 24:46–52; Acts 1:9–11).

15. Several years later, on the road to Damascus, *Jesus appeared to Saul* [#12] of Tarsus (Acts 9:1–8; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8), later known as the apostle Paul.

Some Observations on Postresurrection Events and Their Location

(1) The first three events had no appearances of Jesus, only angels and an empty tomb. (2) Mary Magdalene was the first to see the resurrected Christ. The other women were next, and Peter was third. (3) In all, counting Paul, there were twelve separate appearances. (4) The first nine events (1–9 above) were all in and around Jerusalem. Events 10, 11, and 12 were in Galilee, and 13 and 14 were back in the Jerusalem area. The last one (to Saul) was in Syria, near Damascus (Acts 9:3).

Granted the above, the first events and appearances (#1–6) were on the first resurrection Sunday in Jerusalem. The two disciples (#7) saw him on the second Sunday near Damascus. The ten encountered Jesus on the third Sunday (#8) in Galilee. The eleven saw him on the fourth Sunday (#9) in Galilee. The seven disciples were witness on the fifth Sunday (#10) in Galilee. The five hundred (#11) and all the apostles (#12) saw him on the sixth Sunday, also in Galilee. But James (#13) and all the apostles (#14) witnessed the resurrected Christ on the seventh Sunday back in Jerusalem. There they waited for the Holy Spirit to come "not many days from now" (Acts 1:5)—namely, a week later

on Pentecost Sunday. Little wonder that it was the custom of the early church to meet on Sunday (Acts 20:7; cf. 1 Cor. 16:2).

Observations on the Evidence

On all twelve appearances the persons saw (with the naked eye) and heard (with their physical ears) Jesus. Four times they saw Jesus eat. Four times he was touched. The empty tomb was seen at least four times. Twice the graveclothes were seen, and twice his disciples saw his crucifixion scars. The first eleven appearances occurred during a forty-day period to different groups, including women, the apostles, a doubting apostle, other disciples, an unbelieving brother, and over five hundred persons at the same time. During this time period, Jesus talked with them, taught them, ate with them, and gave them many "indisputable evidences" (Acts. 1:3) of his physical resurrection. He literally exhausted the ways in which he could prove to them that he had been physically raised in the same body in which he had died.

A problem appears in Luke 24:12, which seems to conflict with John 20:3–10. Luke 24:12 mentions only that Peter ran to the tomb after all the women were there and came back and told the apostles. But John says that it was both Peter and John who were there and that it was just after Mary Magdalene was there alone. Assuming Luke 24:12 is a reliable text, Luke may have mentioned only Peter because he was the leader of the two. Likewise, Mary Magdalene may have been singled out because she was the one who spoke first. This seems to be the case when Matthew mentions one angel at the tomb (Matt. 28:5) and John mentions two (John 20:12). The "we" (John 20:2) implies others were with Mary Magdalene. However, Luke 24:12 may be an early copyist error since it is not in some early manuscripts. The RSV omits it. The NASB brackets it and adds, "Some ancient manuscripts do not contain verse 12." The Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament lists many old Italian manuscripts, some old Syriac manuscripts, Marcion, Tatian's Diatessaron, and Eusebius (2nd–4th cent.) as omitting verse 12.

Responding to Alternative Hypotheses on the Resurrection

Several alternative explanations for the resurrection of Christ exist, but none of them satisfy the facts of the case.[709] The only reasonable explanation for the missing body, the many appearances, the transformed disciples, and the amazing origin and spread of Christianity is the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth from Joseph's tomb.

That Jesus Never Really Died: The Swoon Theory. This theory was proposed by H. E. G. Paulus in *The Life of Christ* (1828). It reasons that Jesus was not actually dead when taken from the cross and that later in the cool tomb he revived. He later appeared to his disciples, who were convinced that he was alive and heralded the story.

In response to the swoon theory, first and foremost, all the evidence (given above) that Jesus actually died flatly contradicts it. In short, there were too many witnesses of Jesus's death, both friend and foe, for them not to know that Jesus had actually died. Roman crucifixion ensures death. Even liberal critics of the New Testament have rejected the swoon theory. Even antisupernaturalist David Strauss, in *A New Life of Jesus* (1879), wrote:

> It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given to his disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their

> future ministry. . . . Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship.[710]

More recently, New Testament critic James Tabor wrote succinctly: "Dead bodies don't rise—not if one is clinically dead—as Jesus surely was after Roman crucifixion and three days in a tomb."[711]

That Joseph of Arimathea Removed the Body. It is unreasonable to suppose that Joseph removed the body of Jesus. When could he have done it? If in the dark with torches, he could have been seen. If in the morning at dawn, the women were already there (Luke 24:1). Further, what motive would Joseph have to remove the body? Certainly this was not to keep the disciples from stealing it, since Luke claims that Joseph himself was a disciple of Christ (Luke 23:50–51). And if he were not a disciple, then he could have produced the body and squelched the false story of the resurrection. Furthermore, Joseph was a pious man and would not have removed the body on the Sabbath (see Luke 23:50–56). And by the next day the guard was placed at the tomb (Matt. 27:62–66). What is more, where could Joseph have taken the body? It was never found even though almost two months elapsed before the disciples began preaching the resurrection. This was plenty of time to expose the fraud, if it were one. The truth of the matter is that the character of Joseph, the anxiety of the Jewish leaders, and the inability of anyone to find any corpse of Jesus were strong arguments against this hypothesis. On top of this, there is the overwhelming positive evidence of the many resurrection appearances of Christ. If Joseph stole the body, how can some twelve different appearances to a total of over five hundred people be explained?

That the Roman or Jewish Authorities Removed the Body. The hypothesis that the authorities took the body is completely untenable. If the authorities had the body, they could have easily produced it and disproved the Christian claims. This they would have been more than happy to do, as is evidenced by the manner in which Christians were challenged and persecuted from the very beginning (see Acts 4; 5; 7). Furthermore, it is ridiculous to suppose that the authorities took the body and then turned around and blamed the disciples for stealing it (Matt. 28:11–15). That the consistent attitude of authorities toward the disciples was one of *resistance*, not refutation, is a strong indication of the reality of the resurrection of Christ. Finally, neither does the view that the authorities took the body explain the many unquestioned appearances of Christ to hundreds of disciples.

That the Disciples Removed the Body of Jesus. The allegation that the disciples stole the body of Christ is a derogation of their character as honest men. It is also inconsistent with their unimaginative minds; they were not clever plotters. Even Schonfield looks to someone else to fit his clever plot thesis (see above, under "The Objection That Jesus Manipulated Events to 'Fulfill' Prophecies"). The disciples were fearful men who had fled the scene for fear of being caught (Mark 14:50). Furthermore, the tomb was heavily guarded (Matt. 27:64–66). And the story of the guards that the body was stolen is highly implausible, since they were not reprimanded for falling asleep on duty. This hypothesis, if true, would make the disciples out to be the most pious frauds who ever lived. We would have to believe, contrary to psychological fact, that they died for what they knew to be false, and that they were transformed from cowards to courageous men in a few weeks by a deceptive plot that enabled them to turn the known world upside down. It is hardly more miraculous to believe in the resurrection itself than to believe this highly unlikely hypothesis.

That the Women Went to the Wrong Tomb. Some have suggested that the women went to the wrong tomb while it was yet dark and that, seeing it empty, they reported that Jesus had risen. This position also is untenable. If it was so dark, why was the gardener already working (John 20:15)? If they went to the wrong tomb, why did not the authorities go to the right tomb, produce the body of Jesus, and

disprove the disciples' claim? Further, why is it that Peter later made the same "mistake" in broad daylight (John 20:6)? How is it that both the women and Peter saw the empty graveclothes, if they were at the wrong tomb? Finally, how can we account for the numerous subsequent appearances of Christ to others in broad daylight during a forty-day period (Acts 1:3)?

That the Tomb Was Never Visited. It has been suggested that almost two months went by before the disciples proclaimed the resurrection and that their belief was based on spiritual appearances to them, but that no one ever really visited the tomb to verify a bodily resurrection. This hypothesis is contradicted by a host of facts, most of which have already been discussed. First of all, the Gospels clearly indicate that several people did visit the tomb at different times (Matt. 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20). Furthermore, the repeated bodily appearances of Christ belie this theory. In addition, if the disciples had not visited the tomb, the authorities could have done so and refuted the claim of the resurrection. But instead of refuting it, the authorities resisted it. Likewise, this theory would not account for the miraculous transformation of the disciples, or for the conversion of thousands of people in the very city in which the claim had been made only a few weeks after it had been made (Acts 2:41).

That the Disciples Were Hallucinating. Another theory is that the disciples were hallucinating about the resurrection appearances. This, of course, is incredible for many reasons. First, these appearances occurred to twelve different groups of people during a forty-day period (plus the appearance to Paul later) in different places. Such mass and repeated hallucinations are unheard of. As the saying goes, "You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time." Second, hallucinations happen to people who are predisposed to believe in an event. But the disciples were largely predisposed not to believe it (Luke 24:13–25; John 20:25). Hence, the psychological conditions for hallucinations did not exist with the individuals who had the encounter. Finally, Jesus appeared to several people at a time (seven, ten, eleven, twelve, and more). Certainly there is no evidence of a mass hallucination of five hundred people at the same time (1 Cor. 15:6)! What is more, all these theories are contrary to the multiple facts of the New Testament record, which has overwhelming evidence to support its authenticity (see chap. 18).

Summary and Conclusion

On the basis of the historical reliability of the New Testament (chap. 18) we can be sure that we possess the essence of the teachings of Christ about himself and his deeds. In view of the messianic prophecies Jesus fulfilled, the titles of deity he applied to himself, and the worship he accepted, as well as the other claims to deity Christ made, we must conclude that Jesus thought of himself as God incarnate in human form. An examination of his disciples' beliefs about him reveals that they too taught that he was equal with and identical to God (chap. 19).

However, Jesus not only claimed deity but also provided a unique and threefold proof that he was truly the person he claimed to be. He miraculously fulfilled dozens of prophecies made hundreds of years before his birth, he lived a sinless and miracle-filled life, and he died and rose triumphantly and bodily out of the grave. This convergence of three lines of the miraculous in one man—Jesus of Nazareth—confirms his claims to be the unique Son of God. Jesus alone claimed and proved to be deity. No other great world religious leader ever even claimed to be God, and certainly none had a unique convergence of three sets of miracles to prove that he was God in human flesh.

This puts us in a position to answer another of David Hume's objections to miracles. Hume argued that all religions present miracles in support of their truth claims; hence, no religion can appeal to miracles since their claims are mutually self-canceling. However, this implies that if one and only one religion had an unprecedented and unparalleled convergence of miracles to support its founder's claim to be God, then this would be divine approval on his claim. On the basis of this, we may argue two things. First, only Christianity is true. Second, all other religions (based as they are on similar sub-Christian evidence) are false for two reasons: (a) they hold views on essential truth that are opposite to Christian theism, and opposites cannot both be true; and (b) none of them have unique (miraculous) evidence since they *are* mutually self-canceling. Christianity alone has unique confirmation for its truth claims.

One very important consequence follows from the conclusion that Christ is God—namely, his divine authority. As we will see in chapter 21, whatever Christ taught comes to us as the Word of God. And since God cannot lie or teach what is false (Heb. 6:18; John 17:17), it will follow that whatever Jesus taught is true. It is from this point that we will be able to leave the Bible as a merely historically reliable document (chap. 18) and move on to see that, based on the authority of Christ as the Son of God, the Bible is also a divinely authoritative document—namely, the written Word of God (see chap. 21).

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21
The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

To this point we have established a test for a worldview (part 1) and have applied that test to all the worldviews (part 2), concluding that only theism meets the test (chap. 15). It has been the goal of part 3 to defend the basic Christian worldview within the theistic framework. Since Christianity is a supernatural (chap. 16) and historic (chap. 17) religion, it was necessary to defend both its supernaturalness and its historicity. Then, once the historical reliability of the New Testament was established (chap. 18), it was examined to determine the central claims of the dominant figure, Jesus Christ (chap. 19). Next, it was necessary to evaluate the evidence for Jesus's claim to be God in human flesh (chap. 20). Now, in this last chapter, the teachings of Jesus as the divinely authoritative Son of God are examined to discover whether the Bible is the written Word of God. Since for all sections of historic Christianity the Bible is the only and final written revelation of God and the basis for faith and practice, this will complete what we call "basic" Christianity.

By "basic" Christianity we mean all that is necessary to establish the basis of the Christian worldview in contrast to other theistic worldviews, such as Judaism and Islam. There are other essential truths in the Christian faith common to all historic and orthodox believers,[712] but apologetically "basic" truths are necessary for the rest and are crucial in distinguishing Christianity from non-Christian forms of theism. Of course, theism distinguishes itself from all forms of nontheism (chaps. 9–14) and religions based on them. The basic Christian truths here will include (1) theism (chap. 15), (2) supernaturalism (chap. 16), (3) the deity of Christ (chaps. 19–20), and (4) the inspiration and authority of Scripture, which is the topic of the present chapter.

The logic of this chapter is that if Jesus is the Son of God (chap. 19), confirmed by special acts of God (chap. 20), then the Bible must be the Word of God (this chapter), since that is what Jesus taught. In short, the evidence that the Bible is the written Word of God is anchored in the authority of the living Word of God, Jesus Christ (John 1:1). The basic argument in support of this runs as follows: (1) the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chap. 18); (2) these documents accurately present Christ as claiming to be God incarnate and proving it by fulfilling messianic prophecy, by living a sinless and miraculous life, and by predicting and accomplishing his resurrection from the dead (chaps. 19–20); (3) whatever Christ (who is God) teaches is true; (4) Christ confirmed that the Old Testament is the written Word of God and promised that his disciples would write the New Testament (this chapter); (5) therefore, it is true on divine authority of Jesus Christ that the Bible is the written Word of God.

Christ's Confirmation of the Inspiration and Authority of the Old Testament

Christ and the apostles did much of their teaching *from the* Old Testament, but what is sometimes overlooked is that they also taught a great deal *about* the Old Testament. Both direct and indirect

references unmistakably manifest their affirmation that the Old Testament writings are the inscripturated Word of God.[713] If Jesus, whose divine authority we have confirmed, did indeed teach that the Jewish Scriptures were the inspired Word of God, then they are.

Since we have already argued for both the reliability of the New Testament documents and the integrity of Christ's apostles as eyewitness reporters of what Jesus taught (chap. 18), we need not separate here the words of Jesus from those of the apostles for two reasons. First, the testimony of the apostles about the Old Testament does not differ from Christ's, nor does it add in kind to Jesus's view. Second, according to the confirmed integrity of the apostolic witness, they were not giving merely their own personal views but were expressing what Jesus himself taught (cf. John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:1).

The Old Testament Teaching about Its Own Authority

From the very beginning, the Old Testament writings of Moses were held to be sacred and were stored in the ark of God (Deut. 10:2). Prophetic writings were added to this collection as they were written (Josh. 24:26; 1 Sam. 10:25; etc.). Moses claimed that his writings were from God (cf. Exod. 20:1; Lev. 1:1; Num. 1:1; Deut. 1:3), and the remainder of the Old Testament recognizes the divine authority of Moses's writings (Josh. 1:8; 1 Sam. 12:6; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:12–13). After Moses came a succession of prophets who claimed "thus saith the Lord." Near the end of Old Testament history there were collections of "Moses and the prophets" held as divinely authoritative (Dan. 9:2; Zech. 7:12). The acknowledgment of the divine authority of Moses and the prophets' writings continued through the period between the Testaments (cf. 2 Macc. 15:9) and into the Qumran literature (*Manual of Discipline* I, 3; VIII, 15), and then on into the New Testament (Matt. 5:17–18; Luke 24:27).

The New Testament Claim about the Divine Authority of the Old Testament

Jesus and the New Testament writers indicated in many ways their belief that the Old Testament was God's Word. Sometimes they referred to the Old Testament as a whole; other times they mentioned specific sections, books, or events, and sometimes even tenses, words, or parts of words as possessing the authority of God.

New Testament Teaching about the Inspiration of the Old Testament as a Whole. Second Timothy 3:16 declares, "*All* scripture is breathed out by God," which in context refers to the "sacred writings" of the Jewish faith in which young Timothy was taught (v. 15).[714] The comprehensive use of these writings for all "faith and practice" indicates the belief that these writings included the entire canon of Jewish sacred Scripture (v. 17). The New Testament often refers to the authoritative writings of the Jews as "the Scriptures." Jesus said, "Scripture *cannot be broken*" (John 10:35), or, "You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). The less common but more powerful designation "the Word of God" is used interchangeably with "Scripture" (John 10:35). Paul employs the same phrase (Rom. 9:6; 2 Cor. 4:2). A similar phrase, "the oracles of God," is used by Paul in reference to the whole Old Testament (Rom. 3:2). Sometimes the word "Law" (of God) is used to denote the authority of the Old Testament (John 10:34; cf. John 12:34). But probably the most common way of referring to the whole Old Testament is the phrase "law and prophets" or the equivalent. This is used a dozen times in the New Testament, and it depicts all the Old Testament writings as the authoritative voice of God. Jesus claimed that the law and the prophets will never pass away (Matt. 5:17). Jesus said that the law and the prophets included all the divine revelation up

to John the Baptist (Luke 16:16, 31), and Paul claimed that it was the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The phrase "it is written" is used more than nineteen times in the New Testament; some have application to the Old Testament in general (Mark 9:12; Luke 21:22) and indicate the divine authority of what is written. Likewise the necessity for the word to be "fulfilled" is sometimes used in connection with references to the divine authority of the whole Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:44).

New Testament Teaching about Sections of the Old Testament. The usual way of referring to the Old Testament indicates two divisions, the Law and the Prophets. The former was Moses's writings, believed by the Jews to include the first five books of the Old Testament. "Moses" (2 Cor. 3:15), the "law of Moses" (Acts 13:39), and the "book of Moses" (Mark 12:26) are often alluded to by the New Testament as the Word of God. The word *prophets* identifies the second part of the Old Testament (John 1:45; Luke 18:31). Second Peter makes it very clear that all prophetic writings come from God, "because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (1:21 RSV). This division is used in the later part of the Old Testament itself (cf. Zech. 7:12; Dan. 9:10–11).

New Testament Teaching about the Divine Authority of Specific Books of the Old Testament. Jesus and the New Testament writers did not have occasion to quote every book in the Old Testament, but when they did cite a specific book it was often with introductory phrases that indicated their belief in the divine authority of that specific book. Of the twenty-two (twenty-four)[715] books numbered in the Jewish Old Testament, some eighteen are cited by the New Testament. There is no explicit citation of Judges, Chronicles, Esther, or the Song of Solomon, although Hebrews 11:32 refers to events in Judges; 2 Chronicles 24:20–21 may be alluded to in Matthew 23:35; Ruth is mentioned in Matthew 1:5; Song of Solomon 4:15 may be reflected in John 4:10–11, 14; and the feast of Purim, instituted in Esther, was accepted by the New Testament Jews.

Virtually all of the remaining books of the Old Testament are cited with divine authority by the New Testament. Jesus himself cited Genesis (Matt. 19:4–5), Exodus (John 6:31), Leviticus (Matt. 8:4), Numbers (John 3:14), Deuteronomy (Matt. 4:4), and 1 Samuel (Matt. 12:3–4). He also referred to Kings (Luke 4:25) and possibly 2 Chronicles (Matt. 23:35), as well as Ezra-Nehemiah (John 6:31). Psalms is frequently quoted by Jesus (see Matt. 21:42; 22:44), Proverbs is quoted by Jesus in Luke 14:8–10 (see Prov. 25:6–7), and Song of Solomon may be alluded to in John 4:10. Isaiah is often quoted by Christ (see Luke 4:18–19). Likewise, Jesus may have alluded to Jeremiah's book of Lamentations (Matt. 27:30; cf. Lam. 3:30) and perhaps to Ezekiel (John 3:10; Ezek. 36:25). Jesus specifically quoted Daniel by name (Matt. 24:15). He also quoted passages from the twelve (minor) prophets (Matt. 26:31). Other books, such as Joshua (Heb. 13:5), and Jeremiah (Heb. 8:8–12) are quoted by New Testament writers. The teachings of Ecclesiastes are clearly reflected in the New Testament (cf. Gal. 6:7 and Eccles. 11:1; Heb. 9:27 and Eccles. 3:2).

More than the number of individual books cited, the authoritative manner in which they are often cited indicates that Jesus taught the full divine authority of these books. Quotations are prefaced with "it is written," "that it might be fulfilled," "until heaven and earth pass away" (Matt. 5:18), "you are wrong" if you do not believe (Matt. 22:29), and even "God commanded" (Matt. 15:4). In short, the written words of these books were considered to be God's words. David (who wrote nearly half the Psalms) described this when he wrote, "The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). Jesus confirmed this when he said, "David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him [the Christ] Lord" (Matt. 22:32 NIV, citing Ps. 110:1).

New Testament Teaching about the Historicity of Specific Events in the Old Testament. Jesus and the New Testament writers not only cited sections and books of the Old Testament as inspired; they also often taught the truth of specific Old Testament events recorded in these books. Jesus himself taught the creation of Adam and Eve (Matt. 19), Noah's flood (Luke 17:27), Jonah and the great fish (Matt. 12:40), Elijah's miracles (Luke 4:25), Moses's miracles in the wilderness (John 3:14; 6:32), plus many other persons and events. Taking the total testimony of Jesus and the New Testament writers who related his teaching, one can virtually reconstruct the main events of the Old Testament, including creation (John 1:3), the fall of man (Rom. 5:12), the murder of Abel (1 John 3:12), the flood of Noah's day (Luke 17:27), Abraham and the patriarchs (Heb. 11:8–22), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:29), the offering of Isaac (Heb. 11:17), Moses and the burning bush (Luke 20:37), the exodus from Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1–2), miraculous provision of the manna (1 Cor. 10:3–5), lifting up of the bronze serpent (John 3:14), the fall of Jericho (Heb. 11:30), the miracles of Elijah (James 5:17), the famous judges (Heb. 11:32) and kings (Matt. 12:42), Daniel in the lions' den (Heb. 11:33), and the rejection of the Old Testament prophets (Matt. 23:35).

Note, first, that most of the major Old Testament events are taught to be historically true by Jesus or the New Testament writers. Second, often the passages are cited with emphatic parallel to events that Christ claimed to be historical facts (see Matt. 12:40). Third, sometimes Jesus clearly affirmed the plain historical truth of his teachings on the basis of the authenticity of those Old Testament persons or events (Matt. 22:32). Jesus once challenged a Jewish leader by saying, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

New Testament Teaching about Tenses, Words, and Parts of Words as Authoritative. Sometimes the New Testament hinges the authority of its teachings on the very tense of a verb or a single letter of a word. Jesus taught the doctrine of the resurrection on the present tense of the Old Testament phrase "I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Matt. 22:32), thus indicating that Abraham was still alive. Paul contended that the singular form of "offspring" or "seed" in the phrase "and to your [Abraham's] offspring" gave it messianic significance (Gal. 3:16). Even granting hyperbole for the sake of emphasis, it is a significant statement on the complete authority of every part of the Old Testament that Jesus proclaimed that "not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18 NIV)—literally, "not an iota, not a dot."

A Summary of Jesus's Teaching on the Divine Authority of the Old Testament

1. *It has Divine Authority.* Jesus declared the divine authority of the Old Testament as the written Word of God: "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' . . . It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' . . . Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only'" (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10 NIV). He insisted that it was inspired by the Spirit of God, saying, "David [was] speaking by the Spirit [of God]" when he wrote (Matt. 22:43 NIV).

2. *It Is Imperishable.* Jesus declared of the whole Old Testament: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:17–18 NIV).

3. *It Is Unbreakable.* "If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). The phrase "cannot be broken" is equivalent to "is infallible," and

Jesus used it of the whole Old Testament.

4. *It Is Inerrant (Wholly True or without Error).* Jesus declared to the Sadducees, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures [which do not err] or the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). Jesus declared to God, "Your Word is truth" (John 17:17). The Bible cannot err since it is the Word of God, and God cannot err. "It is written . . . 'Live . . . by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matt. 4:4). Paul said, "Let God be true though every one were a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

5. *It Is Historically Reliable.* Jesus affirmed the historicity of Jonah, saying, "For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). He also affirmed the historicity of the flood: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark" (Matt. 24:37–38 NIV). He also affirmed the historicity of the first "male and female" (Adam and Eve) (Matt. 19:4–6) and many other Old Testament persons and events (listed above).

6. *It Is Scientifically Accurate.* Jesus affirmed the scientific accuracy of the most disputed part of the Bible, the first two chapters of Genesis, in their account of the creation of Adam and Eve. The Pharisees asked him a moral question: "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" (Matt. 19:3 NIV). He gave a historical and scientific fact as the basis for his moral teaching: "Haven't you read . . . that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?" (vv. 4–5 NIV). He added elsewhere, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

7. *It Has Ultimate Supremacy*. Jesus exalted the Word of God above the most venerated human traditions (teachings). "Jesus replied, 'And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? . . . Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition'" (Matt. 15:3, 6 NIV). He gave the strongest rebuke in Scripture to those who exalted their traditions above the Word of God (Matt. 23). Likewise, in the Sermon on the Mount he rebuked those who believed what they "heard" that others "said" (orally) (Matt. 5:21, 27, 31, 38, 43) that negated the written Word of God (Matt. 5:17–18).

These seven affirmations about the written Word of God (the Old Testament) make it very clear that Jesus, as the Son of God, affirmed that the whole Old Testament is the written, inspired, imperishable, inerrant Word of God on whatever it affirms, doctrinally, morally, historically, or scientifically.

Affirmation or Accommodation?

The response of the critics undermines Jesus's words by claiming that he was not really affirming these many divinely authoritative things about the Old Testament, but was rather accommodating himself to the accepted Jewish beliefs of the day and using them as a vehicle to convey his spiritual message to them. According to this accommodation theory, Christ affirmed neither the authority of the Scriptures nor the authenticity of the events recorded therein; he simply appealed to the accepted Jewish beliefs about the Old Testament and used them as a starting point in his discourses. If this is so, then Jesus did not really teach Jonah was in the great fish but simply used the story like a parable or illustration of his own resurrection.

Jesus, as it were, adapted his message to the Jewish tradition and culture in which he found himself. Accordingly, he never really affirmed or taught any such things as those listed above about the Old Testament; he simply taught from it as an accepted religious model or myth structure.

In response to this hypothesis, we should observe first that it confuses divine adaptation to human finiteness with accommodation to human error. Certainly an infinite God must *adapt* his revelation to the finite human understanding of the people to whom he communicates. However, it is quite another thing for God to *accommodate* his revelation to the error of sinful minds. Adaptation to finitude is necessary, but accommodation to error is neither necessary nor morally possible for a God of absolute truthfulness (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2).[716]

Furthermore, numerous facts known from the life and activity of Christ render the accommodation theory untrue.[717] The combined testimony against the accommodation theory makes it so highly implausible that no sensible reader of the New Testament ought to embrace it.

The Emphatic Manner of Citation of the Old Testament by Jesus. Oftentimes Jesus cited the Old Testament with such emphasis that it eliminates the possibility of accommodation: "Truly, truly, I say unto you . . ." or "you have heard that it was said . . . but I say to you" (John 3:11; Matt. 5:38–39). Elsewhere Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Jesus's teaching that "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35) and that "not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the law until all is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18) flatly contradicts the accommodation hypothesis.

The Direct Comparison of Old Testament Events with Historical Happenings. Often Jesus compares Old Testament events with historical occurrences in a strong manner. When responding to an evil generation's demand for a sign from heaven, Jesus replied, "No sign shall be given to [this generation] except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39–40). It seems highly improbable that Jesus would compare something so essential as the historicity of his own death and resurrection to a mythological Jewish belief. It is much more reasonable to conclude that Jesus is affirming the historicity of Jonah, as indeed the Old Testament itself does (see 2 Kings 14:25). In like manner, Christ draws strong analogies between the destruction of Sodom and the flood of Noah, on the one hand, and historical teachings about his own ministry and coming again, on the other hand (see Luke 17:26–30).

The Importance of the Historicity of Old Testament Events and the Doctrines Jesus Taught. Often it is impossible to separate the doctrine being taught by Jesus from the historicity of the event to which he refers. The point Jesus is making about marriage and divorce—an obviously physical union of two bodies into "one flesh"—is void unless the Old Testament quotation about Adam and Eve refers to actual and historical persons of flesh and bone. "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female . . . ? What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:4, 6). Here the very validity of Jesus's answer to the question about marriage and divorce depends on the reliability of there being a literal creation in the beginning of a male and female whom God had joined together as "one flesh." Hence, there is no way here to completely separate the doctrinal or spiritual from the physical and historical in Jesus's teaching.

Jesus's Frequent Rebukes of False Jewish Tradition and Error. The evidence for the Gospel record is that Jesus is anything but an accommodator. He did not hesitate to make forthright pronouncements. Jesus rebuked the Jewish ruler Nicodemus, saying, "Are you a teacher of Israel and yet *you do not understand* these things?" (John 3:10). To the Sadducees Jesus said plainly, "*You are wrong*, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus repeatedly debunked false Jewish belief with the emphatic phrase, "you have heard that it was said . . . but *I say to you*" (Matt. 5:38–39). On another occasion Jesus deliberately decried Jewish teaching that went contrary to God's truth with the challenge, "Why do you break the

commandment of God for the sake of *your tradition*?" (Matt. 15:3). It seems plain from these events that Jesus did not hesitate to refute error whether it was accepted Jewish belief or not. The same consistent picture of Jesus's rejection of false Jewish tradition and teaching is evident in his relation to the belief about keeping the Sabbath (see Matt. 12:12).

Jesus's Forthrightness in Condemning False Teachers. The portrait of a young revolutionary attacking the inflexible religious establishment of the day fits Christ much better than that of an accommodator to accepted traditions and teachings. The severe denunciation of Matthew 23 has led some unbelievers even to charge that Jesus was unkind.[718] Yet the fact that other unbelievers consider Jesus so soft that he sacrificed truth to his hearers' fancy indicates the extreme dilemma of unbelief. The Jesus who gave his life for this sinful world and who forgave his enemies for crucifying him (Luke 23:34) was not unkind or unloving (John 10:11; 15:13). However, Jesus's love for humans and for truth did prompt him to take a firm stand against error and false teachers. "Woe to you, blind guides. . . . Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! . . . You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" (Matt. 23:16, 29, 33).

Even in what is universally acknowledged to be Jesus's greatest moral discourse and what some interpret in a very pacifistic manner, Jesus had strong words of warning about avoiding error: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15). And in the great Olivet Discourse near the end of his life Jesus was still warning against "false Christs and false prophets" (Matt. 24:24). The Gospel picture of Christ is consistent; he is a debunker of error and a rebuker of false teachers and definitely not an accommodator to either.

In summary, neither the activity, attitudes, nor affirmations of Jesus were accommodations to error. When Jesus affirmed something as true, it was because he believed it to be so. And because he was the Son of God, his affirmations carry divine authority. Indeed, Jesus declared, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). He added elsewhere, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Hence, when Jesus taught the divine origin and authority of the Old Testament, he was not mouthing false Jewish beliefs; rather, he was teaching divine truth.

Limitation or Authorization?

It has been hypothesized by some that Jesus's human knowledge did not extend to matters such as the authority and authenticity of the Old Testament. His teaching was purely doctrinal and spiritual, not historical and critical. Some critics have argued that in the incarnation Jesus "emptied himself" of omniscience. He himself said that he was ignorant of the time of his second coming (Mark 13:32). Nor did he know whether there were figs on the tree (Mark 11:13). Luke said that Jesus "increased in wisdom" as other humans do (Luke 2:52), and Jesus asked many questions that revealed his ignorance of the answers (Mark 5:9, 30; 6:38; John 14:9). This being the case, perhaps Jesus was ignorant of the true origin and nature of the Old Testament and of the historical truth of events in it.

If true, this "limitation theory" is damaging to the case for the authority of the Old Testament, so let us examine the evidence carefully.

First, it seems necessary to grant that Jesus was indeed ignorant of many things *as a human*. Of course, as *God* (see chap. 20), Jesus was infinite in knowledge and knew all things (Ps. 147:5).[719] But Christ has two natures: one infinite or unlimited in knowledge, and the other finite or limited in knowledge. Could it be that Jesus did not really err in what he taught about the Old Testament but that

he simply was so limited as a human that his knowledge and authority did not extend into those areas? A careful look at the evidence gives an emphatic answer to this question.

Jesus Had a Supernormal Knowledge Even as a Human. Even though Jesus as a man was finite and limited in his knowledge, nevertheless, even in his human state he possessed supernormal, if not supernatural, knowledge of many things. He saw Nathanael under the fig tree, although he was not within normal visual distance (John 1:48). Jesus amazed the woman of Samaria with the information he knew about her private life (John 4:18–19). Jesus knew in advance who would betray him (John 6:64) and "all that would happen to him" in Jerusalem (John 18:4). He knew about Lazarus's death before he was told (John 11:14) and of his crucifixion and resurrection before it occurred (Mark 8:31; 9:31). Jesus had superhuman knowledge of the location of fish (Luke 5:4).[720] Whatever natural limitations to his knowledge there were, it is clear that at times it was far beyond what other normal humans possessed. Where, then, did he get knowledge in order to teach what he did about the Old Testament or other topics?

Christ Possessed Complete and Final Authority for Whatever He Taught. Christ claimed that whatever he taught came from God with absolute and final authority. Jesus believed and proclaimed, "All things have been delivered to me by my Father" (Matt. 11:27 NKJV). He claimed, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). When Jesus commissioned his disciples, he stated, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18–19). Elsewhere Jesus claimed that the very destiny of humanity hinged on his words (Matt. 7:24–27) and that his words would judge all people in the last day (John 12:48). The emphatic "truly, truly" is found some twenty-five times in John alone, and in Matthew he declared, "Not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law" that he came to fulfill. Jesus then placed his own words on a par with it (Matt. 5:18, 21–22). Jesus claimed that his words bring eternal life (John 5:24) and vowed that all his teaching came from the Father (John 8:26–28). Furthermore, even though he was a man on earth, Christ accepted the acclaims of deity and allowed humans to worship him on many occasions (cf. Matt. 28:17; John 9:38).

So, while Jesus was limited in that, as a human, he did not know everything, nonetheless, he was not errant in either knowledge or authority on what he did teach. And he did teach repeatedly and emphatically (see above) that the Old Testament is the divinely inspired and completely authoritative Word of God in whatever it teaches. *Hence, while Jesus was limited in areas on which he did not teach (like the time of his second coming), nonetheless, he was not limited in either truth or authority on what he did teach.*

Therefore, despite the necessary limitations involved in a human incarnation (Phil. 2:5–6), there is no error or misunderstanding in whatever Christ taught. Whatever limits there were in the extent of Jesus's knowledge, there were no limits to the truthfulness of his teachings. Just as Jesus was fully human and yet his *moral* character was without flaw (Heb. 4:15), likewise he was finite in human knowledge and yet without *factual* error in his teaching (John 8:40, 46). In summation, whatever Jesus taught came from God. Hence, if Jesus taught the divine authority and historical authenticity of the Old Testament, then this teaching is the truth of God.

The Nature of the Inspiration of the Old Testament

Granted that Jesus affirmed the inspiration of the Old Testament, just what do we mean when we speak of "inspiration"? The answer to this question has several aspects. For Jesus, as for the Jews, to say a writing was inspired was to say that it was sacred (cf. John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:15), that it was "by the [Holy] Spirit" (Matt. 22:43), and that it was "from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). To say it is "inspired" is to say "Spirit-moved" humans (2 Pet. 1:20–21) uttered "God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16 NIV) writings.

Inspiration Is Verbal

It was not merely the thoughts or the oral pronouncements of the prophets that were inspired, but the very *words*. Moses "wrote down all the *words* of the LORD" (Exod. 24:4), and David confessed, "His *word* is on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). Jeremiah was told to "diminish not a *word*" (Jer. 26:2 KJV). Jesus repeated over and over that the authority was found in what "is *written*" (see Matt. 4:4, 7). Paul testified that he spoke in "*words* . . . taught by the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:13). And the classic text in 2 Timothy 3:16 declares that it is the "writings" (Gr. *graphē*) that are inspired by God.

Inspiration Is Plenary

Jesus not only affirmed the written revelation of God but also taught that the *whole* (complete, entire) Old Testament was inspired by God. Everything, including Moses and the prophets, is from God (Matt. 5:17–18) and must be fulfilled (Luke 24:44). Paul added that "*whatever* was written in former days [in the Old Testament] was written for our instruction" (Rom. 15:4) and that "*all scripture* is inspired by God" and therefore "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16–17 RSV). That is to say, the inspiration of the Bible extends to everything it *teaches*, whether spiritual or factual. Of course, not everything *contained* in the Bible is *taught* by the Bible. The Bible contains a true record of Satan's lies (see Gen. 3:4), but the Bible is not thereby teaching that these lies are true. Plenary inspiration means only that whatever the Bible teaches is true is actually true.

Inspiration Conveys Divine Authority

Further, the authority of the Bible's teaching flows from its divine origin as the oracles or Word of God (see Rom. 3:2). Jesus said of the Old Testament, "Scripture cannot be broken," for it is the "word of God" (John 10:35). Jesus claimed the authority of "it is written" or similar phrases for his teaching over and over again (cf. Matt. 22:29; Mark 9:12). He resisted the devil by the same written authority (see Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). The written Word, then, is the authority of God for settling all disputes of doctrine or practice. It is God's Word in human words; it is divine truth in human terms. [721]

Inspiration Implies Inerrancy

Jesus believed that God's Word is true (John 17:17), and the apostles taught that God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). Furthermore, Jesus affirmed that every "iota and dot" of the Old Testament was from God. This, of course, is a claim only for the writings as they were given by God—namely, *the original text*—and not necessarily for the copies that have been in minor detail subjected to scribal

errors. The net result, however, is the necessary conclusion that the Old Testament is without error (i.e., inerrant) in whatever it teaches. Simply put, whatever God utters is true and without error. The original writings of the Old Testament are the utterance of God through humans. Therefore, the text of the Old Testament is the inerrant Word of God. This is what both Jesus and the apostles taught with divine authority, an authority confirmed by the unique concurrence of three miracles in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (see chap. 20).

Of course, we do not have the original writings, so we must ask how reliable the copies we possess are. In short, the answer is that they are totally reliable in conveying all the major truths of the Christian faith. The variants in the copies deal mostly with minor teaching. Even agnostic New Testament scholar Bart Ehrman, who parades the many textual differences, admits that "in fact, most of the changes found in our early Christian manuscripts have nothing to do with theology or ideology. Far and away the most changes are the result of mistakes pure and simple—slips of the pen, accidental omissions, inadvertent additions, misspelled words, blunders of one sort of another" (see chap. 18).[722]

To emphasize again, if we count "errors" the way Ehrman does in the New Testament manuscripts, his own book has 1.6 million errors! Sixteen errors were discovered in the first printing of 100,000 copies of his book *Misquoting Jesus*, which means 1.6 million errors. But none of these affect the central message of his book. And neither do the textual variations in the 5,800-plus New Testament manuscripts affect any doctrine of the Christian faith. The great New Testament Greek scholar A. T. Robertson said, "The real concern is with a thousandth part of the entire text" (= 99.9 percent accurately copied).[723] And none of these variants affect any major doctrine of the Bible. Philip Schaff noted that no "article of faith" was affected. *That would make the New Testament 100 percent reliable on the doctrines of the Christian faith.* Schaff said that of the extant variant readings, only fifty were of real significance, and there is no "article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching."[724]

The Extent of the Old Testament Scriptures

There is some dispute as to which books are to be included in the Old Testament canon of Scripture. Some claim that the so-called apocryphal books, written between 250 BC and the time of Christ, are also part of the Old Testament canon. Hence, we must turn our attention from the *nature* of the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God to the *extent* of those inspired writings.[725]

An Examination of Arguments Advanced in Support of the Apocrypha

The basic debate is between the Roman Catholic position that the books of the so-called Alexandrian Canon should be included in the Old Testament and the Protestant position that only the books of the Jewish Palestinian Canon are inspired. The books involved in the dispute are named as follows by Protestants (and Catholics):

1. 1 Esdras (called 3 Esdras by Roman Catholics)
2. 2 Esdras (called 4 Esdras by Roman Catholics)
3. Tobit

4. Judith
5. Addition to Esther (Esther 10:4–16:24)
6. The Wisdom of Solomon
7. Ecclesiasticus or Sirach
8. Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch)[726]
9. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men (Dan. 3:24–90)
10. Susanna (Daniel 13)
11. Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14)
12. The Prayer of Mannasseh
13. 1 Maccabees
14. 2 Maccabees

In favor of the acceptance of the Apocrypha the following arguments have been advanced: (1) the New Testament quotes directly from the book of Enoch (Jude 14) and alludes to 2 Maccabees (Heb. 11:35); (2) some apocryphal books were found in the first-century Jewish community at Qumran; (3) many early Christian fathers, including Origen (AD 185–253), Athanasius (AD 293–373), and Cyril of Jerusalem (AD 315–86), quoted some apocryphal books; (4) many early Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament, such as Codex Vaticanus (AD 325) and Codex Sinaiticus (AD 350), contained the Apocrypha; (5) Augustine accepted all the apocryphal books later proclaimed canonical by Trent (in 1546); (6) many early church synods, such as the one convened by Pope Damascus (AD 382), the Synod of Hippo (AD 393), and three synods at Carthage (AD 393, 397, 419), accepted the Apocrypha; (7) some later bishops and councils between the ninth and fifteenth centuries listed the apocryphal books as inspired; (8) this long line of Christian usage culminated in the official pronouncement of the Council of Trent (1546) that the Apocrypha (or "deutero-canonical" books, as Roman Catholics call them) is part of canonical Scripture.

Despite the long list of names and churches associated with the apocryphal books, these arguments must be rejected in view of the following considerations:

1. No apocryphal book is quoted as Scripture in the New Testament. The New Testament writers allude to and even cite pagan poets whose books were not considered inspired Scripture (see Acts 17:28).

2. The Qumran community was not an orthodox Jewish community and, hence, is not an official voice of Judaism. In any event, there is no real evidence they considered the Apocrypha inspired. They had no commentaries on apocryphal books, nor were any of them written in the special Hebrew script used only for inspired books.

3. Many of the early Christian fathers, including Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius, and all important fathers before Augustine, clearly rejected the Apocrypha. Some of these leaders made presumable or occasional reference to one or more apocryphal books in a homiletical way, but none of the major early fathers accepted the apocryphal books into the Christian canon.

4. Augustine's acceptance of the Apocrypha is on the wrong basis because it contained stories of "extreme and wonderful suffering of certain martyrs."[727] On that ground *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* should be in the Bible too! Also, Augustine's view was refuted by his contemporary Jerome, who was the greatest biblical scholar of his day. Furthermore, even Augustine himself recognized that the apocryphal books were rejected by Judaism as not part of their inspired Scripture.

5. No local synod or canonical listing included these apocryphal books for almost the first four hundred years of the church's existence. Later fathers and councils were (mis)influenced by Augustine's acceptance of them.

6. These later local listings are based on a Greek Alexandrian tradition in which the Hebrew Old Testament was translated (250 BC following) and not on a Jewish Palestinian tradition in which the Old Testament was actually written and accepted by Jewish people.

7. Even up to and through the time of the Reformation (AD 1517) some Roman Catholic scholars, including Cardinal Cajetan, who opposed Luther, did not accept the Apocrypha as authentic Old Testament books.

8. Furthermore, Christian usage of the Apocrypha has varied greatly down through the years. Many fathers would cite and even read some apocryphal books in church but excluded them from their canonical lists. The best explanation seems to be that they had two groupings: one doctrinal canon that determined matters of faith and another, broader, homiletical (preaching) collection that they used to illustrate and expand on their beliefs.

9. The Council of Trent (AD 1546), the first ecumenical (general) council of the church, made a purportedly infallible pronouncement on the Apocrypha. This was a wrong decision made by the wrong group (Christians rather than Jews), made at the wrong time (1,500-plus years later), for the wrong reasons. They rejected the Prayer of Manesseh, 1 Esdras (3 Esdras), and 2 Esdras (4 Esdras), which contain a strong verse against praying for the dead (e.g., 2 Esdras 7:105), and they accepted a book with a verse supporting prayer for the dead (i.e., 2 Maccabees 12:25[46]). Also, proclaiming 2 Maccabees canonical some twenty-nine years after Luther lashed out against prayers for the dead (in 1517) is highly suspect, especially since the book supported prayers for the dead.

The Extent of the Jewish Canon of Jesus's Day

The mistake in the broader-canon theory is that it employs later *Christian usage* as the determinative factor in deciding the Jewish canon rather than original *propheticity* (i.e., whether it was written by a prophet of God). This is wrong for two reasons: first, these apocryphal books were Jewish books written by Jewish writers for Jewish people and rejected by the Old Testament Jewish community. It is presumptuous for Christians hundreds of years after the fact to inform Jews which books belong in their sacred writings. Second, the New Testament clearly informs Christians that the Old Testament was given into the custodianship of the Jews. Paul wrote, "The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2). In view of this it behooves us to ask: What is the extent of the Old Testament canon according to the Jews? To this question there is only one answer, as even Roman Catholic scholars readily admit; namely, the twenty-four (thirty-nine, see next section) books of the Jewish and Protestant Bibles of today compose the Jewish Old Testament canon.

There is an even more decisive argument than Jewish custodianship against the Apocrypha—namely, the authoritative testimony of Christ. Which books were included in the Old Testament of which Jesus spoke when he proclaimed it the unbreakable and authoritative Word of God? The answer to this question seems clear: there were no more (and no less) than twenty-four (or thirty-nine) books of the Jewish Old Testament to which Christ attested.

The Jewish Scriptures of the Time of Christ

The best authority for the Jewish canon of the time of Christ is the Jewish historian Josephus. Josephus lists twenty-two books, "five belonging to Moses . . . the prophets, who were after Moses . . . in thirteen books. The remaining four books containing hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life."[728] Ruth was no doubt appended to Judges, and Lamentations to Jeremiah, thus accounting for the difference between the numbering of twenty-four to twenty-two. Job was probably listed among the historical books, since Josephus cites it in his writings and since there would be only twelve historical books without it. This would leave Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon in the last category. With this arrangement we have the identical books of the thirty-nine now in the Protestant Old Testament, since by counting 1 and 2 Samuel as one book, 1 and 2 Kings as one book, 1 and 2 Chronicles as one book, Ezra-Nehemiah as one book, and the twelve (minor) prophets as one book, the difference between the numbering of thirty-nine and twenty-four is accounted for. That Josephus considered this to be the complete and final Jewish canon is made clear by his declaration that the succession of Jewish prophets ended in the fourth century BC. Likewise the Talmud teaches that "after the latter prophets Haggai, Zechariah . . . and Malachi, the Holy Spirit departed from Israel."[729] Since all the apocryphal books were written after the fourth century (i.e., from 250 BC to the time of Christ), it is clear that they were not in the Jewish Old Testament. This fact is supported by the apocryphal books themselves, for not only do they lack the claim to any divine inspiration, but they also are devoid of any predictive or messianic prophecy, and do in fact disclaim inspiration. First Maccabees says that in those days "there was great distress in Israel, such as has not been since the time the prophets ceased to appear among them" (9:27).

New Testament Evidence for the Canon of Jesus and the Apostles

The best evidence for the extent of the Jewish canon of the time of Christ is found in the New Testament. Both Jesus and the apostles affirm only the canon containing the thirty-nine (twenty-four) books of the Protestant Old Testament. This is supported by several lines of evidence. First, no apocryphal book is ever cited as Scripture by either Jesus or the New Testament writers, even though they obviously possessed them and could have cited them. Coupled with the fact that Jesus and the apostles did have occasion to quote from some eighteen of the twenty-two (twenty-four) books in the Jewish Old Testament, the omission of any quotations from the Apocrypha actually entails a rejection of these books. Second, the New Testament makes at least a dozen references to the whole Old Testament under the phrase "law and prophets" or "Moses and the prophets" (cf. Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27), and yet the apocryphal books are admitted by both friend and foe to have never been in the section of the canon known as "the prophets." Their late date would automatically have placed them in the "writings" or so-called third section of the Old Testament. Even during the intertestamental period (see 2 Macc. 15:9) and in the Qumran literature (*Manual of Discipline* I, 3; VIII, 15), the Old Testament is referred to under the standard phrase "the law and the prophets." The threefold division that emerged by the time of Christ and is reflected in Philo, Josephus, and possibly the introduction to Sirach, was apparently an alternative way of subdividing "the prophets" into "prophets" and "writings" for festal or literary reasons. Jesus's use of the expression "the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44), possibly alluding to a threefold division that emerged by his time, is in direct parallel with the phrase "Moses and all the prophets," earlier in the same chapter (v. 27). Psalms may have been singled out because of its messianic significance, which Jesus was emphasizing here.

According to New Testament usage the phrase "the law and the prophets" includes "all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27) and "all the Prophets and the Law [that] prophesied until John [the Baptist]" (Matt. 11:13). Paul the apostle staked his complete orthodoxy on the grounds that he believed "everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets" (Acts 24:14). Jesus said he had come to fulfill "all" according to what was predicted in the "the Law [and] the Prophets" (Matt. 5:17).

We cannot avoid the conclusion that the phrase "law and prophets" referred to all divine written revelation from Moses to Jesus.[730] This being the case, the fact that neither the first-century Jews, Jesus himself, nor the apostles accepted or quoted the apocryphal books as inspired is sufficient evidence that these books were not part of their canon of Scripture. This conclusion has been the uniform testimony of Judaism throughout the centuries. The extent of the Old Testament canon is limited, by both the Jews, who wrote it, and Jesus, about whom it is written, to the thirty-nine (twenty-four) books listed in Protestant Old Testament today.

Summing Up the Evidence for the Inspiration of the Old Testament

Jesus taught emphatically that the Jewish Old Testament (which is identical to the Protestant Old Testament) was the very inspired and written revelation of God. In this teaching he neither accommodated himself to false tradition nor was limited in his knowledge of the matters of which he spoke. His teaching was with all authority in heaven and on earth. And since Christ has been verified to be the unique Son of God, whatever he teaches is the very truth of God. Hence, on the testimony and authority of Christ it is established as true that the Old Testament, with all of its historical and miraculous events, is an inscripturated revelation of God.

There are many other evidences that the Bible is the Word of God—for example, its supernatural predictive prophecy, its amazing unity, its superior moral quality, its worldwide publicity, and its dynamic power.[731] However, it is sufficient that Jesus verified the Old Testament to be God's Word. Since Jesus is confirmed to be the Son of God, his testimony that the Bible is the Word of God is more than adequate. Either one accepts the authority of Scripture, or else one must impugn the integrity of the Son of God; they stand together.

Christ's Promise That the New Testament Would Be Inspired

Jesus not only *confirmed* the divine authority of the Old Testament but also *promised* the inspiration of the New Testament. He promised to lead his disciples into "all truth" by the Holy Spirit. This promise was not only claimed by the apostles but also fulfilled in the apostolic writings of the New Testament. With these twenty-seven books God completed the fulfillment of all things that had been promised and closed the canon of revelation. On this, every major section of Christendom agrees.

The Life and Ministry of Christ Is the Fulfillment of All Things

The New Testament teaches that Christ is the full and final fulfillment of "*all* that is written" (see Luke 21:22). Jesus claimed that he was the fulfillment of the *whole* Old Testament on many occasions (cf. Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44). The Jews knew only two major time periods: "the former days" and "the latter days." Jesus brought in the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the latter days so that the apostles announced that they were already in the "later times" (1 Tim. 4:1) or the "last hour" (1 John

2:18). The book of Hebrews declares that God spoke in many ways through the Old Testament prophets in times past, "but in these *last* days he has spoken to us by his Son" (1:3), who is the full and final revelation of God, "the very stamp of his nature" (1:3 RSV) who brings both *eternal* (5:9) and *final* salvation (10:10–12). Daniel was told, "Shut up the words and seal the book, until the time of the end" (12:4); but in the last apocalypse (unveiling) John is told, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for *the time is near*" (Rev. 22:10). All of God's revelation comes to a culmination in Christ. In him are "hidden *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3). The very theme of Colossians is *completion* of perfection in Christ (1:28). Not only is Christ the completion of God's revelation, but the complete revelation of God is about him. On at least five occasions Christ declared himself to be the theme of the Scriptures (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Heb. 10:7). John said that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10), and it was by "the Spirit of Christ" that the prophets spoke (1 Pet. 1:11).

Jesus Promised to Guide His Disciples into All Truth

Since Jesus was the culmination of God's revelation in the "last times," and since Jesus taught the apostles and promised that he would send them the Holy Spirit who would "teach [them] *all things* and bring to [their] remembrance *all*" that he had said to them (John 14:26), God's revelation ends with their apostolic teachings. Jesus added, "When he the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into *all the truth*" (John 16:13). The phrase "all the truth" obviously does not refer to all scientific or all historical truth, and so on, but to "all the truth" necessary for faith and practice (see 2 Tim. 3:16–17), which, of course, includes some scientific and historical matters. After Jesus died he continued "to do and teach" through the apostles (Acts 1:1). Even so, the promise is doctrinally all-inclusive and very important, since it ties in with the claim that Jesus is the fulfillment of all prophecy and that all final truth for faith and practice resides in him. The important question is not *whether* Jesus is the final and complete revelation of God—which is repeatedly declared in Scripture—but rather *where* that full and final revelation can be found and *who* are its authorized agents.

The Twelve Apostles Are the Only Authorized Agents of Christ

Jesus chose twelve apostles and commissioned them with divine authority. He gave them power to forgive sins (John 20:23). Through the apostles' hands the early believers received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14–15), and to the apostles were committed the "keys to the kingdom" (Matt. 16:19; cf. 18:18). Peter used his "keys" to open the door to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the gentiles (Acts 10). The early church was built on the "foundation of the apostles and prophets"[732] (Eph. 2:20), it continued the "apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42), and it was bound by apostolic decision (see Acts 15). Even Paul, whose apostleship and revelation came from God (Gal. 1), had his credentials confirmed by the Jerusalem Twelve (see Gal. 2:2, 9). The writer of Hebrews acknowledged that the message of Christ "was attested to us by those who heard" (2:3)—namely, apostles (cf. Acts 1:22; John 15:27). This latter phrase is important; there were prophets and writers of New Testament books other than the twelve apostles (Mark, Luke, Paul, James, Jude, and the writer of Hebrews), but each of these had his message confirmed by the twelve apostles. Mark was an associate of Peter; James and Jude were associates of the apostles and were probably brothers of Jesus (Matt. 13:55) and of each other (Jude 1:1; James 1:1). Luke was a companion of Paul, whose message was confirmed by the apostles (Acts 15; Gal. 2) and also by Peter (2 Pet. 3:15–16). The writer of Hebrews acknowledges his debt to the

twelve apostles (2:3), who "heard" Christ. When Judas died, two qualifications for being one of the Twelve were set forth: a potential candidate had to be (1) a member of the eyewitness circle of disciples from the beginning of Jesus's ministry, and (2) an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:21–22). Only two men qualified, and Matthias was elected and then "numbered with the eleven apostles" (v. 26).

The implications of these facts have a most significant bearing on the limits of the New Testament canon of Scripture; namely, no writing after the death of the Twelve can be canonical. Only the Twelve can confirm the truth of a writing about Christ. When all the eyewitnesses had died, the canon of revelation about Christ ceased. Many scholars believe John was the last living apostle and that he wrote no later than AD 95.[733] And since Christ is the full and final revelation of God, we must conclude that the collection of books authorized by Christ and his twelve apostles is the full and final revelation of God to humanity.

The Twenty-Seven Books of the New Testament Are the Only Authentic Apostolic Writings Extant

Once the facts were generally known, the Christian church has been unanimous down through the years as to the authenticity of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. It is true that some second-century Christians had doubts about various New Testament books such as Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 3 John, Jude, and Revelation (called "antilegomena" or "spoken against").[734] But once the authorship and message were attested, their divine authority was universally accepted. And despite the pre-archaeological higher criticism of some of these books in modern times, there is ample evidence to support the traditional first-century authorship of all of them.[735] Interestingly, the often-challenged epistle of 2 Peter has much more evidence for its apostolic authorship than do the works of Tacitus.

The following chart reveals that every book of the New Testament (except the tiny, one-chapter book of 3 John)[736] was accepted immediately by the early fathers within the following century and onward.

Even within the New Testament there is ample evidence of a canon of apostolic literature developing as the documents were written. First, believers deliberately *selected* only the authentic writings about the life of Christ (Luke 1:1–4) and only the authentic epistles of apostles (2 Thess. 2:2). The apostles were the living eyewitness authorities for the teachings about Christ that were circulating (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:3; 4:1, 6). John had to squelch a false story about an apostle circulating in his time (John 21:22–23). The apostles had to settle a dispute that arose over the teachings of Paul (Acts 15). Second, those books that were authorized by the apostles were recommended for *reading* in the churches (Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:3). Third, these books were both circulated in other churches (Col. 4:16; Rev. 1:11) and collected along with the Old Testament Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:15, 16). There is even evidence within the New Testament that later books quoted earlier ones as Scripture. Paul quotes Luke (1 Tim. 5:18; cf. Luke 10:7), and Jude quoted Peter (cf. Jude 17–18; 2 Pet. 3:2–3). Likewise, Luke refers to the Gospels written before his time (Luke 1:1).[737] He also assumed Theophilus possessed his "first book" (Acts 1:1). Many of the books were probably intended for a wide group of churches. The book of James is addressed to the "twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (1:1). First Peter is written to "exiles of the dispersion" (1:1), and Revelation was sent to "the seven churches" of Asia Minor (1:11). So from the very earliest of times a selected group of apostolically approved writings was circulating and being read in the churches.

The New Testament Canon during the First Four Centuries

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BOOK	Matt.	Mark	Luke	John	Acts	Rom.	1 Cor.	2 Cor.	Gal.	Eph.	Phil.	Col.	1 Thess.	2 Thess.	1 Tim.	2 Tim.	Titus	Philem.	Heb.	James	1 Pet.	2 Pet.	1 John	2 John	3 John	Jude	Rev.
Pseudo-Barnabas (ca. 70–130)	X	X	X							X						X	X		X		X	X					
Clement of Rome (ca. 95–97)	X	X	X			X	X			X					X		X		X	X	X	X					
Ignatius (ca. 110)	X			X	X	X	X		X	X		X								X	X						
Polycarp (ca. 110–50)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X		X	X			
Hermas (ca. 115–40)	X	X			X		X	X			X		X		X	X			X	X	X		X				X
Didache (ca. 120–50)	X		X			X	X						X		X												X
Papias (ca. 130–40)				X																							X
Marcion (ca. 140)			X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X									
Irenaeus (ca. 130–202)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Justin Martyr (ca. 150–55)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X							X						X
Muratorian (ca. 170)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	?	X	X
Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X			X	X
Tertullian (ca. 150–220)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Origen (ca. 185–254)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	?	X	?	?	X	X
Old Latin (ca. 200)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X
Cyprian (d. 258)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Apostolic (ca. 300)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 315–86)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Eusebius (ca. 325–40)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	?	X	?	X	?	?	?
Athanasius (367)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jerome (ca. 340–420)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hippo (393)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Carthage (397)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Augustine (ca. 400)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Main Source: Index of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, compiled by Bernhard Pick.

X = Citation or allusion

? = Uncertain

Note: 1. All New Testament books but 3 John are cited by time of Irenaeus (130–202).
2. All New Testament books are cited by time of Muratorian Canon (c. 170).
3. All New Testament books were accepted by the church as a whole by 393.

Only twenty-seven such authentic books have been passed down to us from the apostles. Inasmuch as Jesus promised to lead the apostles into "all the truth" (John 16:13), we may rightly assume that these twenty-seven books fulfill that promise. Even if there were other books by an apostolically authorized New Testament writer, such as an epistle to which Paul allegedly referred in 1 Corinthians 5:9,[738] we may assume that it contained no truth about Christ not found in these twenty-seven extant books. The so-called Letter of the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16) may refer to what we know as the book of Ephesians.[739] If not, then it would fall into the same classification as Paul's so-called lost letter to the Corinthians. What we do know is that there are twenty-seven authentic books from the apostolic period that provide a fulfillment of the "all the truth" Jesus promised. In addition we know that the revelation about Christ is the complete and final wisdom of God for humanity (Col. 2:3; Heb. 1:1–2). We may conclude, then, that with the apostolic writings of the New Testament the canon of Scripture is complete. John, the last of the apostles to die, seemed to recognize that he was completing the canon of Scripture when he signed off his Apocalypse. He not only wrote of the final revelation of Jesus Christ, which was to be unsealed, for the time of final fulfillment was at hand (22:10), but he recorded an anathema for anyone who added to or took away from his book (vv. 18–19). Since John was allegedly the last living apostle writing his last book, and since there could be no apostolic book after he died, and since "all the truth" was committed to the apostles, this concluding statement about not adding to "the words of the prophecy of this book" (22:10, 18) has at least an indirect bearing on the whole canon of Scripture. Christ fulfilled all, his apostles told all, and his last apostle completed the canon.

False Prophets and False Writings Can Be Tested

The Old and New Testaments are not the only writings that claim divine origin. The Qur'an claims to be inspired, as do the *Book of Mormon* and the writings of the Bahá'í prophet, Bahá'U'lláh. Many of our contemporaries have also been acclaimed as prophets, the most famous of whom are the late Edgar Cayce and Jeane Dixon. Space does not permit a systematic analysis of the claims and credentials of all the writings of these persons. It will be sufficient for our purposes here to lay down the tests for a false prophet or writing and illustrate the same by examples drawn from these alleged prophets.

Do They Claim to Have a Postapostolic Revelation from God for Humanity? Properly speaking, most of the forecasts of Edgar Cayce and Jeane Dixon are not religious; they do not come as a revelation of God for humanity. These people were simply psychic prognosticators who were wrong many times (see chap. 20) and, hence, fail that test for a false prophet (Deut. 18:22). Muhammad, Joseph Smith, and Bahá'U'lláh are different. They each claim divine revelation.

When any alleged prophet comes with a new revelation of God for humanity, we know that person is not a prophet of God. According to the New Testament, such a person may appear to be a "servant of righteousness" but is really an emissary of the devil or the satanic "angel of light" himself (2 Cor. 11:14–15). We have already seen that Christ is the full and final revelation of God and that his apostles were commissioned to speak "all the truth" about him. When the last of the twelve apostles died, the revelation was completed. Anyone who adds to it is under the anathema of God. Hence, all these modern "prophets" who claim they are adding some new and additional revelation to that of the Bible must be classed as false prophets.

Do They Have a Different Revelation for Humanity? The apostle Paul summed it up well for the Christian when he charged: "Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel

contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). There is only one gospel; it is the gospel of salvation by the grace of God apart from any human works (Gal. 2:21; 3:11; cf. Rom. 4:5; Titus 3:5–7; Eph. 2:8–9).

Believers must be careful; we must "not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). In like manner, Paul warned the Corinthians "not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us" (2 Thess. 2:2). Jesus warned his disciples on several occasions to "beware of false prophets" (Matt. 7:15) and that "false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray" (Matt. 24:24).

How will one know if these "prophets" are false? Moses laid down the conditions in Deuteronomy 13 and 18. "If he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams" (13:2). Moses adds, "You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice" (13:4). Likewise Moses warned that the prophet "who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die" (18:20). In short, any prophet speaking in the name of a different god or giving a different revelation from that of the God of the Bible is a false prophet. Another essential doctrinal test for truth is the confession of Jesus Christ as God in human flesh (1 John 4:2; cf. John 1:1, 14). Those who deny the apostolic confession of Christ are of the "spirit of the antichrist" (1 John 4:3). The apostle John added, "Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (v. 6).

On these two doctrinal criteria alone—the deity and humanity of Christ and justification by faith alone—we know that the writings of the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Bahá'í, Islam, and other modern cults are not of God. Mormons deny both the deity of Christ and salvation by faith alone.[740] Muhammad and Bahá'U'lláh believed Christ was only a prophet, who did not die for our sins and who was superseded by prophet(s) after him.[741] Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Christ, claiming that he was the created angel Michael.[742] Christ proclaimed that he is the only way to God (John 10:1, 9; 14:6), and the apostles emphasized the same (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:10–12). On this ground the writings of Bahá'U'lláh must be rejected since they relegate Christ to the status of a mere prophet whose claims were only for his people and his day but have been superseded by Bahá'U'lláh.[743]

Do They Obtain Their Revelations from Angels or Spirits? God spoke to people of old through dreams (Gen. 28; Dan. 2), visions (Dan. 7; Zech. 1), angels (Gen. 18; Dan. 9), and in "many ways" (Heb. 1:1). But we are emphatically informed that "in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb. 1:2). Paul warned about revelations from an "angel from heaven" (Gal. 1:8) or from a "spirit" (2 Thess. 2:2). In these last days God has given a full and final revelation in his Son and through his authorized apostles. Any other alleged revelation must be in strict accord with what they have said. And all sections of Christendom agree that there are no new normative revelations from God since the New Testament.

The Scriptures also make it plain that any attempt on our part to contact or communicate with spirits from other worlds is forbidden and is not of God. Attempting to communicate with the dead is called "necromancy," and it is explicitly forbidden in Scripture. "There shall not be found among you . . . a necromancer . . . for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord" (Deut. 18:10–12). In view of this warning it is not difficult to determine whether David Berg is of God when he confesses to receiving his "revelations" from his dead mother and from an angel named

"Abraham."[744] The same is true of Bahá'U'lláh, who not only permits but, through his "infallible" interpreter Abdul-Baha, encourages contact with departed spirits, saying: "The unity of humanity as taught by Bahá'U'lláh refers not only to men still in the flesh, but to all human beings, whether embodied or disembodied. . . . Spiritual communion one with another, far from being impossible or unnatural, is constant and inevitable. . . . To the Prophets and saints this spiritual communion is as familiar and real as are ordinary vision and conversation to the rest of mankind."[745] This confession leaves no alternative for the Christian but to pronounce Bahá'U'lláh a false prophet in contact with evil spirits.

Do They Use Any Objects of Divination to Make Their Prophecy? Another test for a true prophet given by Moses and repeated by the prophets involved the use of physical objects with which one would "divine" results. "There shall not be found among you . . . anyone who practices divination . . . for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord" (Deut. 18:10, 12). Isaiah spoke against "diviners" (44:25), and Jeremiah added, "Do not listen to your prophets, your diviners" (27:9). According to Zechariah, "The household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies" (10:2).

On this criterion both Jeane Dixon and Joseph Smith come up wanting. Dixon confessed to the use of a crystal ball. Joseph Smith is known to have used a stone in a hat over his face when translating the *Book of Mormon*.[746] It has been established as well that Smith used a divining stone and that he carried an occult Jupiter Talisman around his neck.[747] Such objects of divination are forbidden by God and are signs of a false prophet.

Does the Prophecy Center in Jesus Christ? Jesus himself claimed to be the theme of prophetic Scripture on at least five occasions (Matt. 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Heb. 10:7). The apostles repeated this claim (Acts 10:43). John wrote, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). Those prophets, then, who do not testify of Jesus are not of God. In his epistle John added, "Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God" (1 John 4:3).

Even a casual examination of the writings of Jeane Dixon reveals that Jesus is not the center of her writings. The writings of Bahá'U'lláh are clearly not centered in Christ, and it is questionable whether Joseph Smith's works are really Christ-centered. Of course, the Qur'an is not a testimony to Jesus. We conclude that only those Scriptures that point to Jesus Christ are of God. The Old and New Testaments are the only Scriptures that unmistakably provide a divinely confirmed and unfolding messianic revelation centered in Jesus.

Do They Ever Utter False Prophecies? It is a mistake to believe that the coming to pass of a prediction is an unmistakable sign of its divine origin. Even pure guesses will sometimes be right. But the opposite is clearly a negative test for a false prophet; that is, "if the word *does not come to pass* or come true, that is a word that the LOrd has not spoken" (Deut. 18:22). It is this negative test for the truth or falsity of a prophecy that renders Edgar Cayce, Jeane Dixon, and their like false prophets. As mentioned earlier (in chap. 20), psychic predictions have a high percent of failure—sometimes even over 90 percent—even when done less than a year in advance. As we noted in chapter 20, Jeane Dixon is known to have been wrong in many predictions, including one that Jacqueline Kennedy would not remarry after the death of her husband President John Kennedy; she married Aristotle Onassis the day after the prediction was made!

Joseph Smith gave many false predictions. In 1832 he falsely predicted that a temple would be built in Missouri before those then living would die. He predicted in 1832 that the US Civil War would involve all nations. It didn't. He also predicted in 1835 that the coming of the Lord would be within fifty-six years (by 1891). It didn't happen. In 1887 he predicted that a copyright for the *Book of Mormon* would be sold in Canada by Smith's representatives, and it was not.[748]

The Watchtower Society (Jehovah's Witnesses), which considers itself "a prophetic" institution, has given many false predictions. Former Jehovah's Witness William Schnell counted 148 changes in the organization's statements about the future that were made between 1917 and 1928.[749] Bahá'í prophet Bahá'U'lláh predicted just before the turn of the century that an age of peace was dawning on the world. His prediction has been followed by the worst time of war the world has ever known, including the First and Second World Wars, the Asian wars, the Near Eastern wars, and the many African wars even in this very day, some one hundred years later.[750]

Are They Official or Confirmed Prophets of God? There is evidence within the Old Testament that there was an official line of prophets beginning with Moses. Each wrote and his book was laid up before the Lord (Deut. 31:24–26; Josh. 24:26). Later Samuel started a school of the prophets (1 Sam. 19:20), and Ezekiel speaks of an official "register" of prophets (Ezek. 13:9 ASV margin). If challenged as to his prophetic credentials, a man of God could depend on miraculous confirmation from God. Moses was given the miraculous rod with which he divided the waters of the sea and performed numerous miracles (Exod. 4). Once when Moses's prophetic office was challenged, the earth opened up and swallowed Korah and his followers (Num. 26:10). Elijah and Elisha performed many miracles to authenticate their prophetic credentials, including calling down fire from heaven (1 Kings 18:38).

The New Testament prophets confirmed their divine credentials in the same miraculous way. Jesus gave power to his disciples to heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, cast out demons, and even raise the dead (Matt. 10:1–4). The writer of Hebrews summarized well the credentials of true apostles, saying they were those through whom "God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 2:4). A person who claims to be a prophet of God must be confirmed by God with a notable act of God. Paul defended his divine authority to the Corinthians by saying to them, "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Cor. 12:12). There were, of course, some false prophets and apostles. Moses was confronted by the magicians of Egypt, who performed some parallel and amazing feats. But when God through the hand of Moses turned the dust into lice, the magicians gave up, crying, "This is the finger of God" (Exod. 8:19). Likewise, the power to raise the dead singled out the true New Testament prophets from the false. None of the modern-day "prophets" stand in the official line of confirmed prophets of God, nor do they possess these unique prophetic powers. They are, then, not prophets of God.

In summation, Jesus was the full and final revelation of God in these last days. Jesus promised the inspiration of the New Testament by promising to give "all the truth" about "everything" he said to his apostles (John 14:26; 16:13). But to be an apostle one had to be an eyewitness of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1). And the apostles lived only in the first century. But the only written record we have of apostolic teaching is in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament—all of which were written by apostles and their associates. Therefore, with the completion of the New Testament we have all the truth that God has revealed for his church. The New Testament canon is complete. The Bible is finished. No new normative[751] revelation for the church is forthcoming. The Scriptures are sufficient for faith and practice.

Summary and Conclusion

In part 1 we discussed the various ways to test the truth of a worldview. We found most of the typical methods lacking (chaps. 1–7), including agnosticism, rationalism, fideism, experientialism, evidentialism, pragmatism, and combinationalism (systematic consistency). Another test was set forth that is suited for examining worldviews or metaphysical systems (chap. 8). It is expressed in first principles of being that apply to all of reality.

In part 2 this test was applied to the various competing worldviews of deism, finite godism, pantheism, panentheism, polytheism, and atheism (chaps. 9–14), none of which measured up to the test. Only theism (chap. 15) was found compatible with the undeniable first principles of being. Thus, we concluded that theism is the true worldview, and all other worldviews opposed to it are not true.

In part 3, we have examined how to test truth claims within the theistic worldview, particularly those of Christian theism. We sought a rational and factual answer to whether the central claims of Christianity are true. Since Christianity claims miraculous support for its claims, we addressed the claims of naturalism against these supernatural claims (chap. 16). Also, since Christianity is a historical religion that claims deity for a historical person (Jesus of Nazareth), we examined the claims of historical subjectivism against objectivity and found them self-defeating (chap. 17). Once these claims were dispelled, the evidence of the historical reliability of the New Testament documents was scrutinized (chap. 18). Finding them to be reliable, we proceeded to examine the claims in them for the deity of Christ (chap. 19) and concluded that the evidence strongly supports his claim to be the Son of God (chap. 20). Then, we examined the teachings of Jesus and discovered that he affirmed the divine authority of the Old Testament and promised the inspiration of the New Testament (this chapter).

This completes the apologetic task to establish that basic Christianity is true. And by the undeniable logic of first principles of knowledge (particularly the principle of noncontradiction), we may concluded that all the opposing views are false. This means that all deistic, finite-godistic, pantheistic, panentheistic, polytheistic, and atheistic views (and religions that hold them) are false (chaps. 9–14), for only a theistic worldview is true (chap. 15), and the opposite of true is false. Likewise, not all theistic religions can be true, since they hold contrary beliefs within a theistic worldview. For example, of the three great theistic religions, only Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, claimed (chap. 19) and proved to be (chap. 20) the one and only theistic God in human form. This he demonstrated by an unprecedented and unparalleled convergence of supernatural confirmation exhibited by no other theistic religion.

Both Islam and official Judaism deny that Jesus is God in the flesh. So, while Judaism (i.e., the Old Testament) predicted Christ (chap. 20) and Islam acknowledged him as a prophet, only Christianity has accepted him for who he is—namely, the Word who is God and who became flesh that we may become the children of God. As John put it, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:1, 11–12).

And this Jesus who was confirmed by multiple miracles (special acts of God) to be the Son of God was given the authority of God to teach that the Bible is the very written Word of God. He confirmed the Old Testament and promised the New Testament. Hence, the Bible is the divinely authoritative Word of God, the basis for all faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16–17). This means that essential Christianity is true, for the core elements and basis for all essential truths of the faith are true.[752]

This does not mean, of course, that there is no truth in other religious writings or holy books. There is truth in Greek poetry (Acts 17:28) and even some truth in Jewish noncanonical writings (Jude 14),

as is manifest from the New Testament usage of these books. The point is that the Bible and the Bible alone contains all the doctrinal and ethical truth God has revealed to mankind. And the Bible alone is the written canon or norm for all truth. All other alleged truth must be brought to the bar of Holy Scripture to be tested. The Bible and the Bible alone has been confirmed by God through Christ to be his infallible Word. As St. Augustine put it, "I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error."[753] Thomas Aquinas added, "We believe the prophets and apostles because the Lord had been their witness by performing miracles. . . . And we believe the successors of the apostles and the prophets only in so far as they tell us those things which the apostles and prophets have left in their writings."[754]

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Notes

Chapter 1. Agnosticism

[1]. See T. H. Huxley, "Agnosticism and Christianity" (1889), in *Christianity and Agnosticism: A Controversy* (New York: Appleton, 1889), 194–240.

[2]. David Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. C. W. Hendel (1748; repr., New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955).

[3]. Ibid., sec. 6, pt. 2.

[4]. Ibid., sec. 4, pt. 2.

[5]. David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith (1779; repr., Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962).

[6]. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (1781; repr., New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), especially 173–74.

[7]. Ibid., 393–94.

[8]. A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936; repr., New York: Dover Publications, 1946).

[9]. Ibid., 1–2.

[10]. Ibid., 16.

[11]. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (1922; repr., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

[12]. Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM, 1955), 99.

[13]. Ibid., 100.

[14]. See chap. 8 for a discussion of these foundational principles.

[15]. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 24.

[16]. See David Hume, "A Letter from a Gentleman to His Friend in Edinburgh," in *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. Ernest C. Mossner and John V. Price (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), 1:187.

Chapter 2. Rationalism

[17]. See René Descartes, *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 3rd ed. (1641; repr. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), I.

[18]. Ibid., II.

[19]. Ibid., III.

[20]. René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Desmond M. Clark (1637; repr., New York: Penguin, 1999), pt. 2.

[21]. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (1676; repr., Digireads.com, 2008), pt. 1, proposition 11.

[22]. See Gottfried Leibniz, *Monadology*, trans. Robert Latta (1714; repr., Oxford: Clarendon, 1898), 1–9.

[23]. Ibid., 40–45. Cf. idem, *Discourse on Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1990), xxiii.

[24]. Leibniz, *Monadology*, 36–39.

[25]. Stuart Hackett, *The Resurrection of Theism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957). Professor Hackett has since modified the claim that these arguments are rationally inescapable to something more like a claim that they are actually undeniable (see chap. 8, under "Undeniability as a Test for Truth").

[26]. Ibid., 54, 60, 62, 65.

[27]. Ibid., 194–95.

[28]. Ibid., 202–3.

[29]. Gordon Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1961), 41.

[30]. Ronald Nash, *The Philosophy of Gordon Clark* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1968), 54.

[31]. Clark, *Religion, Reason and Revelation*, 57–59.

[32]. Ibid., 59–60.

[33]. Ibid., 64, 67, 68. The terms "Law of Non-Contradiction" and "Law of Contradiction," as used by Clark, both have the same meaning.

[34]. Ibid., 76, 77.

[35]. Ibid., 71, 72.

[36]. Gordon Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 30, 34.

[37]. See Norman L. Geisler, "The Missing Premise in the Ontological Argument," *Religious Studies* 9, no. 3 (September 1973): 289–96.

Chapter 3. Fideism

[38]. Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (1885–87; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 3:7. All subsequent references to works by Tertullian are from vol. 3 of *Ante-Nicene Fathers*.

[39]. Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes*, 8.

[40]. Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, 5.

[41]. Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 1.23.

[42]. Ibid., 1.25.

[43]. Tertullian, *The Prescription against Heretics*, 9.

[44]. Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, 1.23.

[45]. Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 1.

[46]. Tertullian, *Treatise on the Soul*, 2.

[47]. Ibid., 5.

[48]. Tertullian, *To Scapula*, 2.

[49]. Unless otherwise noted, quotes by Pascal are taken from his Pensées, Brunschvicg edition.

[50]. Pascal, "Wager," in *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

[51]. Ibid.

[52]. Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. David F. Swenson, Lillian Marvin Swenson, and Walter Lowrie (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).

[53]. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling,* trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

[54]. Ibid.

[55]. Ibid., 80, 66, 69.

[56]. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), sec. 2, 483–84.

[57]. Ibid., 116.

[58]. Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 130.

[59]. Ibid., chap. 2.

[60]. Ibid., 49.

[61]. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, 485.

[62]. Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. from the 6th ed. by Edwyn C. Hoskyns (1919; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1933).

[63]. Karl Barth, *Anselm*, trans. Ian W. Robertson (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960).

[64]. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1961).

[65]. Ibid.

[66]. Ibid.

[67]. Barth, *Nein! Antwort and Emil Brunner* (1934). English trans. "No!" in M. J. Erickson, ed. *Readings in Christian Theology: The Living God*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973).

[68]. Ibid., 75.

[69]. Ibid., 79–85.

[70]. Ibid., 89.

[71]. Ibid., 108.

[72]. See the chapter by Robert Knudsen in *Jerusalem and Athens*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Philadelphia: P&R, 1993).

[73]. Cornelius Van Til, *Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1955), 118.

[74]. Cornelius Van Til, "My Credo," C, 5, in Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens*, 258.

[75]. Van Til, *Defense*, 11, 69, 86, 120.

[76]. Van Til, "My Credo."

[77]. Van Til, *Defense*, 116.

[78]. Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace* (Philadelphia: P&R, 1947), 55.

[79]. Van Til, *Defense*, 264–65.

[80]. Ibid., 263, 258.

[81]. Ibid., 120, 256.

[82]. Alvin Plantinga, *God and Other Minds* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).

[83]. Alvin Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Christian Scholar's Review* 11 (1982): 187–98.

[84]. Kenneth Kantzer, "John Calvin's Theory of the Knowledge of God and the Word of God" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1950).

[85]. Alvin Plantinga, *Nature and Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).
[86]. Norman L. Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 68.
[87]. See Paul Feyerabend, ed., *Mind, Matter, and Method* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966).
[88]. Thomas Aquinas, "On Truth" (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1952–54), 14, 8 and 14, 1, ad 2. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947–48), 2a2ae.2, 10.
[89]. Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), chap. 2.
[90]. Norman L. Geisler, *Christ: The Theme of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), chap. 6.

Chapter 4. Experientialism

[91]. Alfred Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929; repr. New York: Free Press, 1978), 2, 1, 1.
[92]. Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from Plontinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1955).
[93]. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultural Despisers*, trans. John Oman (1799; repr., New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), 18.
[94]. Ibid., 1–18.
[95]. Ibid., 59.
[96]. Ibid., 49–50.
[97]. Ibid., 58.
[98]. Ibid., 53–56.
[99]. Ibid., 65–74.
[100]. Ibid., 87–101.
[101]. Ibid., 92.
[102]. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (1917; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1967), chap. 2.
[103]. Ibid., chaps. 3–6.
[104]. Ibid., chap. 7.
[105]. Ibid., chap. 9.
[106]. Thomas McPherson, "Religion as the Inexpressible," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM, 1963), 132–33.
[107]. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (1922; repr., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).
[108]. McPherson, "Religion as the Inexpressible," 139–41.
[109]. Norman L. Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).
[110]. See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902; repr., New York: New American Library, 1958), chaps. 9, 10.
[111]. McPherson, "Religion as the Inexpressible," 136.

Chapter 5. Evidentialism

[112]. C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel* (1938; repr., London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1964), 11–12, 15, 18.
[113]. John W. Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (1964; repr., Minneapolis: Bethany, 1986), 53–54.
[114]. Ibid., 75, 76.
[115]. Gary Habermas, *The Historical Jesus* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 158, 160.
[116]. Ibid., 284, 285.
[117]. Dodd, *History and the Gospel*, 19–21.
[118]. Ibid., 22.
[119]. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Random House, 1953), 50.
[120]. Herbert Butterfield, "Moral Judgments in History," in *The Philosophy of History in Our Time: An Anthology*, ed. Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Garland, 1985), 244.
[121]. Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Problem of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 94.
[122]. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 100.
[123]. Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), 150–51.
[124]. Fred Hoyle and N. C. Wickramasinghe, *Evolution from Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 24.
[125]. See Stephen C. Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).
[126]. See Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, *Evolution from Space*, 24.
[127]. See Francis Crick, *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981).
[128]. John Hick, ed., *The Existence of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 253–73.
[129]. Ibid., 257, 261.

[130]. Ibid., 269, 271.
[131]. Ibid., 273.
[132]. For further elaboration of the essential doctrines of the orthodox Christian faith, see Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *Conviction without Compromise* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), pt. 1.
[133]. See chap. 15 below.

Chapter 6. Pragmatism

[134]. Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 824, 852.
[135]. C. S. Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief" V, in *Charles Sanders Peirce: The Essential Writings*, ed. Edward C. Moore (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 133.
[136]. Ibid.
[137]. Ibid.
[138]. Ibid.
[139]. Ibid.
[140]. C. S. Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" II, in Moore, *Charles Sanders Peirce*.
[141]. C. S. Peirce, "What Pragmatism Is," in Moore, *Charles Sanders Peirce*.
[142]. C. S. Peirce, "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God," *Hibbert Journal* XX (1908).
[143]. C. S. Peirce, "Concept of God," chap. 28 in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955).
[144]. Ibid.
[145]. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1958), lectures 4–8.
[146]. Ibid., lectures 9–10.
[147]. Ibid., lecture 20.
[148]. Ibid.
[149]. See William James, "The Will to Believe," in *Essays in Pragmatism*, ed. Alburey Castell (New York: Hafner Publications, 1968), 88–89.
[150]. Ibid., 90–98.
[151]. Ibid., 101–6 (emphasis added).
[152]. Ibid., 105–8.
[153]. James, *Varieties*, lectures 11–15.
[154]. Ibid., 280.
[155]. Ibid., 385, 390, 391.
[156]. See William James, *Pragmatism, and Other Essays* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1963), 89, 90, 92, 95, 96.
[157]. James, "What Pragmatism Means," in *Pragmatism*, 38.
[158]. James, "Pragmatism and Religion," in *Pragmatism*, 129, 125, 131, 132.
[159]. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947–48), 1a. 1, 1 reply.
[160]. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith* (San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972), 329.
[161]. Francis Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1968), 109–11 (emphasis added). Schaeffer, of course, has *more* than a mere pragmatic test for truth. He has in some places what appears to be a transcendental argument or one based on actual undeniability (see *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, chap. 1 [Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1972]).
[162]. Thomas Morris, *Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics: A Critique* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), chap. 1.
[163]. As quoted in Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 73–74.
[164]. Ibid.
[165]. Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, ed. D. MacKenzie Brown (London: SCM, 1965), 7, 8, 11, 30.
[166]. Quoted by Joseph L. Blau in introduction to James, *Pragmatism*, xiv.
[167]. Alan Watts's attempt to build a two-level parallel between pantheism and Christianity does not work. See Alan Watts, *The Supreme Identity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), 12, 13, 45, 52, 53. As Watts later saw, both systems must lay claim to truth, but as contrary views, both cannot be true (Alan Watts, *Beyond Theology* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1964], vi, vii).

Chapter 7. Combinationalism

[168]. Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language* (London: Xpress Reprints, 1993), 20–55.
[169]. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 20–55, and idem, *Models and Mystery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).
[170]. Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*, ed. D. Mackenzie Brown (London: SCM, 1965), 7, 8, 11, 30.
[171]. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 20; *Religious Language*, 104, 99.
[172]. Ian Ramsey, *Prospect for Metaphysics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), 153–64, 174.
[173]. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 16.

[174]. Frederick Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, 373–74, and idem, "Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology," *Christian Scholar* 46 (Spring 1963): 13–14.
[175]. Frederick Ferré, *Language, Logic and God* (New York: Harper, 1961), 164, 36.
[176]. Kent Bendall and Frederick Ferré, *Exploring the Logic of Faith* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 165–66.
[177]. Ibid., 166–67.
[178]. Frederick Ferré, "Science and the Death of God," in *Science and Religion*, ed. Ian Barbour (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 147.
[179]. Bendall and Ferré, *Exploring the Logic*, 153–54, 172–73.
[180]. Edward J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 48–53, 105.
[181]. Ibid., 105–12.
[182]. Edward J. Carnell, *Christian Commitment* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 22, 29.
[183]. Carnell, *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 113–17.
[184]. Ibid., 123–25.
[185]. Ibid., 125, 126, 139.
[186]. Ibid., 152–57.
[187]. Ibid., 159–72. The quotation from John Calvin, cited in Carnell, is from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeil, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 1, 5, 10–11.
[188]. Carnell, *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, 175.
[189]. Ibid., 175–78, 190.
[190]. Bendall and Ferré, *Exploring the Logic*, 153–54. Even more recently Ferré has argued for a "polymythic organicism" that allows divergent religious models to be equally adequate. See his *Shaping the Future: Resources for the Post-Modern World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
[191]. See Étienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954).

Chapter 8. Formulating an Adequate Test for Truth

[192]. See chap. 1 for further discussion on this point.
[193]. See chap. 1.
[194]. See Arthur Holmes, *Faith Seeks Understanding* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 46–47.
[195]. See chap. 2 for further elaboration of this point.
[196]. This point is discussed in more detail in chap. 3.
[197]. For further information see chap. 4.
[198]. Chapter 5 treats this at greater length.
[199]. Pragmatism is expounded on and critiqued in chap. 6.
[200]. A more complete analysis is given in chap. 7.
[201]. See Louis Regis, *Epistemology* (New York: Macmillan, 1959).
[202]. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 250–53.
[203]. Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Bethany, 2002), chap. 7.
[204]. See chap. 2.
[205]. See chaps. 9–14.
[206]. See chap. 15.

Chapter 9. Deism

[207]. See John Orr, *English Deism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1934), 61.
[208]. Ibid., 62.
[209]. Ibid., 63.
[210]. Ibid., 67.
[211]. Ibid., 68.
[212]. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1914), chaps. 1, 3.
[213]. Ibid., chap. 12.
[214]. Ibid., 70–71.
[215]. Ibid., chap. 12.
[216]. John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (London: Collins, 1964), book 2, chap. 1.
[217]. Orr, *English Deism*, 111.
[218]. John Locke, *The Works of Locke*, vol. 9, *A Discourse on Miracles* (London: W. Olridge & Sons, 1812), 256.
[219]. Orr, *English Deism*, 121.
[220]. Ibid., 120.
[221]. Ibid., 123.

[222]. Ibid., 124–25.
[223]. Ibid., 132.
[224]. Ibid., 135.
[225]. John Leland, *A view of the principal deistical writers that have appeared in England in the last and present century* (London: printed for B. Dod, 1754–55), 1:113.
[226]. Orr, *English Deism*, 141.
[227]. Ibid., 143.
[228]. Ibid., 144.
[229]. William Paley was a Christian apologist who was famous for his watchmaker teleological argument for the existence of God.
[230]. Orr, *English Deism*, 515.
[231]. Ibid., 153.
[232]. Ibid., 156.
[233]. Ibid., 157.
[234]. Ibid., 159–60.
[235]. Ibid., 163–64.
[236]. David Hume, introduction and conclusion to *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (New York: Hafner, 1948).
[237]. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene (1793; repr., Digireads.com, 2011), 79, 80, 83, 119 (emphasis added).
[238]. Ibid., 81, 179, 81–82, 84.
[239]. Ibid., 83, 84.
[240]. Thomas Jefferson, *The Jefferson Bible*, ed. Douglas Lurton (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1943).
[241]. See Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008).
[242]. See part 3 below, chaps. 17 and 18.

Chapter 10. Finite Godism

[243]. See chap. 15.
[244]. See chap. 13.
[245]. See chap. 12.
[246]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Evil, Problem Of," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 219–24.
[247]. Henry Nelson Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 54–62.
[248]. See Edgar Sheffield Brightman, *A Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1940) and Peter Bertocci, *The Person God Is* (New York: Humanities Press, 1970).
[249]. See chap. 12.
[250]. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Macmillan, 1911), chap. 3.
[251]. Plato, *Republic*, Book 7 in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964).
[252]. See Étienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (1941; repr., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), chap. 1.
[253]. See John Stuart Mill, *System of Logic*, 8th ed. (Charlottesville, VA: Lincoln-Rembrandt, 1986).
[254]. John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays on Religion* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1874), 194.
[255]. Ibid., 192, 190.
[256]. Ibid., 182, 177.
[257]. Ibid., 133, 189.
[258]. Ibid., 186.
[259]. Ibid., 243, 178.
[260]. Ibid., 178.
[261]. Ibid., 64, 5, 6.
[262]. Ibid., 221.
[263]. Ibid., 222, 223.
[264]. Ibid., 229–30.
[265]. Ibid., 231.
[266]. Ibid., 231, 239.
[267]. Ibid., 37, 29.
[268]. Ibid., 29–30.
[269]. Ibid., 64.
[270]. Ibid., 99.
[271]. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chap. 2.
[272]. Ibid.

[273]. Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, 201.
[274]. Ibid., 208–10.
[275]. John Stuart Mill and John M. Robson, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (1865; repr., Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 250.
[276]. Harold Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough* (New York: Summit Books, 1986), 133.
[277]. Ibid., 56.
[278]. Ibid.
[279]. Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 134.
[280]. Ibid., 43.
[281]. Ibid., 45, 141, 132.
[282]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 55.
[283]. Ibid., 58.
[284]. Ibid., 183.
[285]. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 141.
[286]. Ibid., 44.
[287]. Ibid., 84.
[288]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 77.
[289]. Ibid., 103–4.
[290]. Ibid., 78.
[291]. Ibid., 83.
[292]. Ibid., 77, 110, 135.
[293]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Evolution," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 224.
[294]. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 110.
[295]. Ibid., 58.
[296]. Ibid., 58, 119.
[297]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 111.
[298]. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 136.
[299]. Ibid., 53.
[300]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 89.
[301]. Ibid.
[302]. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 148.
[303]. Ibid., 147.
[304]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 180.
[305]. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 86.
[306]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 127.
[307]. Ibid., 128.
[308]. Ibid., 123.
[309]. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, 28.
[310]. Ibid., 28.
[311]. Ibid., 29.
[312]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 143.
[313]. Ibid., 152, 151, 179, 173.
[314]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Hell," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 310–15.
[315]. Kushner, *When All You've Ever Wanted Isn't Enough*, 157.
[316]. Ibid., 183.
[317]. See chap. 11.
[318]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Dualism," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 206–7.
[319]. See chap. 16.
[320]. See chap. 9.
[321]. See chap. 14.
[322]. See chap. 15.
[323]. See C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Collins, 1956), 45.
[324]. Edward J. Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 113. Unfortunately, in *Christian Commitment*, under the influence of Søren Kierkegaard's belief that "truth is subjectivity," Carnell develops this into a "Third kind of Truth" (p. 6) rather than recognizing it as an indication of the application of objective truth to one's subjective life. See Edward J. Carnell, *Christian Commitment: An Apologetic* (New York: Macmillan, 1957).
[325]. Francis Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1972), 70–71.
[326]. See chaps. 1–8.

[327]. See chaps. 18–20.
[328]. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966), 148.
[329]. See chap. 14.
[330]. Peter Bertocci, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951), 398 (emphasis added).
[331]. See Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, chaps. 16–17.

Chapter 11. Pantheism

[332]. Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1955), 5.8.9; 3.8.9; 5.1.8; 6.8.18; 6.7.37; 4.2.2.
[333]. Ibid., 2.4.11; 1.8.7; 6.9.1; 1.8.3.
[334]. Ibid., 4.8.4; 1.7.7; 6.9.11; 1.3.6; 2.4.12.
[335]. Ibid., 1.6.8; 1.2.4; 1.8.5; 1.8.4.
[336]. Ibid., 1.6.3–4; 1.6.8; 6.9.11; 1.3.6.
[337]. Ibid., 3.8.10; 5.3.4.
[338]. Ibid., 6.7.35; 5.5.6; 6.9.4; 6.7.34; 6.9.10.
[339]. Ibid., 5.5.6; 5.3.13; 6.9.4; 6.7.29; 5.3.14.
[340]. Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (1676; repr., Digireads.com, 2008), pt. 1, definitions 1, 3, 4, 5.
[341]. Ibid., propositions 1, 2, 4, 5.
[342]. Ibid., proposition 8.
[343]. Ibid., propositions 10, 7.
[344]. Ibid., propositions 14, 15.
[345]. Ibid., propositions 15, 17.
[346]. Ibid., propositions 17, 18, 21, 28.
[347]. Ibid., propositions 33 and 32.
[348]. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, introduction to *The Principal Upanishads* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), i.
[349]. Ibid., 65, 66.
[350]. Ibid., 52, 55, 56, 59.
[351]. Ibid., 67.
[352]. Ibid., 63, 64.
[353]. Ibid., 71, 66.
[354]. Other commentators on Hinduism, such as M. Hereyanna, understand the world (*maya*) as an illusory appearance of Brahman, the way a rope may appear to be a snake from a distance (*The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* [London: Allen & Unwin, 1949], 158–59). In the Shankara tradition the world (*maya*) is completely illusory or nonbeing.
[355]. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*, 80, 82, 83.
[356]. Ibid., 77, 96, 97, 102.
[357]. Ibid., 114, 18.
[358]. Ibid., 127.
[359]. D. T. Suzuki, *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider, 1969), 45.
[360]. Ibid., 132.
[361]. Ibid., 113.
[362]. Ibid., 112.
[363]. Ibid., 88.
[364]. D. T. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 112.
[365]. Suzuki, *Outlines of Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 140, 141. Emphasis in original.
[366]. Ibid., 219, 220.
[367]. Ibid., 101–2.
[368]. Ibid., 46–47.
[369]. Ibid., 149.
[370]. Ibid., 47.
[371]. Timothy White, "Slaves to the Empire: The 'Star Wars' Kids Talk." *Rolling Stone*, 24 July 1980, 37.
[372]. George Lucas, *Star Wars* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 120.
[373]. Ibid., 81.
[374]. Dale Pollock, *Skywalking: The Life and Films of George Lucas* (New York: Harmony Books, 1983), 139.
[375]. Ibid., 140.
[376]. Clarke, Gerald. "Great Galloping Galaxies," *Time*, 23 May 1983, 68.
[377]. Carlos Castaneda, *Tales of Power* (New York: Pocketbook, 1974), 84.
[378]. Ibid., 32, 244, 132.
[379]. Ibid., 9, 95.

[380]. H. P. Owens, *Concepts of Deity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), 72.
[381]. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947–48), 1a13, 11.
[382]. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 6.7.29.

Chapter 12. Panentheism

[383]. See Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).
[384]. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Macmillan, 1911); idem, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: H. Holt & Co., 1911).
[385]. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1929), 95, 33–35.
[386]. Ibid., 27, 129, 126.
[387]. Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 304–5.
[388]. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 44–45, 130, 134, 320–21.
[389]. Ibid., 66, 35, 366.
[390]. Ibid., 68, 73, 37, 28.
[391]. Ibid., 32, 367; Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Paterson, NJ: Littlefield Adams, 1948), 150.
[392]. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 366.
[393]. Ibid., 48, 64, 392, 169.
[394]. Ibid., 521, 70, 134, 46, 392.
[395]. Ibid., 527, 33, 135, 523.
[396]. Ibid., 169, 525, 529, 518.
[397]. Ibid., 95, 66, 31, 340, 135, 47.
[398]. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 192, 241, 130–31; Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 31–32.
[399]. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 362, 72, 346, 66, 7.
[400]. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1962).
[401]. Ibid., 64–67, 93–94.
[402]. John Cobb, *A Christian Natural Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), 178.
[403]. Ibid.
[404]. Ibid., 204, 210.
[405]. Shubert Ogden, *The Reality of God, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 58–59.
[406]. Shubert Ogden, "How Does God Function in Human Life?" *Christianity and Crises* 27 (15 May 1967): 106–7.
[407]. Ogden, *Reality of God*, 10.
[408]. Ibid., 59.
[409]. Shubert Ogden, "Theology and Philosophy: A New Phase in the Discussion," *Journal of Religion* 44, no. 1 (January 1964): 7.
[410]. Ogden, *Reality of God*, 59. See Charles Hartshorne, "God as Absolute, yet Related to All," *The Review of Metaphysics*, v1, n1 (1947), 24.
[411]. Shubert Ogden, "Love Unbounded," *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 19, no. 3 (Spring 1966): 14.
[412]. Shubert Ogden, "God and Philosophy: A Discussion with Antony Flew," review of *God and Philosophy*, by Antony Flew, *Journal of Religion* 48, no. 2 (April 1968): 175.
[413]. Ogden, *Reality of God*, 17–18.

Chapter 13. Polytheism

[414]. Hesiod, *Theogony*, trans. by M. L. West (1966; repr. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).
[415]. David Miller, *The New Polytheism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).
[416]. Ibid., 11.
[417]. Ibid., 6, 7, 60, 81.
[418]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Theism," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 722–23.
[419]. Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).
[420]. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith. 4th ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1938), 370.
[421]. Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 317.
[422]. Joseph Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1959), sec. 130:22.
[423]. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 322.
[424]. Ibid., 516; also cited in Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourse* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Library, 1966), 11.286.
[425]. Young, *Journal of Discourses*, 7.333.
[426]. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, sec. 93: 21–23; also cited in *Pearl of Great Price* (Liverpool, England: H. D. Richards, 1851), "Book of Moses" 3:4–7.

[427]. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 321; also cited in Young, *Journal of Discourse*, 3:93.
[428]. Lorenzo Snow, *The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow: Fifth President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 1.
[429]. Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 132.
[430]. Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 345–47; see also ibid., *Doctrine and Covenants*, 321.
[431]. Dale Pollock, *Skywalking: The Life and Films of George Lucas* (New York: Harmony Books, 1983), 140.
[432]. Timothy White, "Slaves to the Empire: The 'Star Wars' Kids Talk." *Rolling Stone*, 24 July 1980, 37.
[433]. George Lucas, *Star Wars* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 37, 121, 145. The first film released turned out to be *Star Wars: Episode IV–A New Hope* (1977).
[434]. Gerald Clarke,"Great Galloping Galaxies." *Time*, 23 May 1983, 68.
[435]. David L. Miller, *The New Polytheism: Rebirth of the Gods and Goddesses* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).
[436]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Neopaganism," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 522–26.
[437]. Miller, *New Polytheism*, 7.
[438]. Ibid., 9.
[439]. Ibid., 3; citing Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).
[440]. See chap. 14.
[441]. Miller, *New Polytheism*, 37.
[442]. Ibid., 4.
[443]. Ibid., 4, 81, 27, 28.
[444]. Ibid., 28, 5.
[445]. Ibid., 6.
[446]. Ibid., 11.
[447]. Ibid., 81, 64.
[448]. Ibid., 40.
[449]. Ibid., 64, 65.
[450]. Ibid., 6, 60.
[451]. Ibid., 6, 7.
[452]. Ibid., 80, 81.
[453]. Ibid., 66.
[454]. Ibid., 67, 68.
[455]. Ibid., 9.
[456]. Ibid., 55, 34, 59.
[457]. Ibid., 5, 30; cf. 28.
[458]. Ibid., 55.
[459]. Ibid., 63, 83.
[460]. Ibid., 29.
[461]. Ibid., 7.
[462]. Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972).
[463]. See Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, 27.
[464]. Ibid., 35.
[465]. Ibid., 112.
[466]. Ibid., 36.
[467]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Polytheism," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 602–6.
[468]. Miller, *New Polytheism*, 7.
[469]. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, ix, 126, 135.
[470]. Ibid., 37, 124.
[471]. Ibid., 76–77.
[472]. Ibid., 59.
[473]. Miller, *New Polytheism*, 60, 62.
[474]. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1958), 78, 82.
[475]. Cited in *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 16 December 1985, 2A.
[476]. Plotinus, *The Six Enneads* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 6.6.13.
[477]. See John Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).
[478]. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, 116, 145.
[479]. Ibid., 98.
[480]. Ibid., 66.
[481]. Ibid., 103.

[482]. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 79–80.
[483]. See Francis Beckwith, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1991).
[484]. See chap. 14.
[485]. See William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (London: Macmillan, 1979).
[486]. Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, 88, ix.
[487]. Ibid.
[488]. Ibid., 101–3.
[489]. Ibid., x, 14, 121.
[490]. Ibid., 116.
[491]. See Thomas Altizer, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966).
[492]. Mark Satin, *New Age Politics: Healing Self and Society* (New York: Deli Publishing, 1979), 113–14.

Chapter 14. Atheism

[493]. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 295.
[494]. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pt. 4.
[495]. See Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Gay Science" in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976).
[496]. Thomas Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).
[497]. Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).
[498]. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957).
[499]. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947–48), 1a2, 3; 1a3, 4.
[500]. The proper way to state the first law of thermodynamics is as follows: "The amount of *actual* energy in the universe remains constant." This is in contrast to the second law, which speaks only about "the amount of *usable* energy in a closed isolated system as running down." Unlike the atheists' misstatement of the first law, the correct statement of it says nothing about whether energy is eternal. It simply tells us that as far as we can observe, we are not losing or gaining actual energy in the universe.
[501]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 758–59.
[502]. J. N. Findlay, "Can God's Existence Be Disproved?" in A. Plantinga, *The Ontological Argument* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 111–12.
[503]. Pierre Bayle, *Selections from Bayle's Dictionary* (Indianapolis: Bobb-Merrill, 1965), 157–58.
[504]. Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian*.
[505]. The voluntaristic tradition in ethics springs from Duns Scotus, but other theists (following Aquinas) argue for an ethic rooted in God's nature.
[506]. Albert Camus, *The Plague* (New York: Modern Library, 1948).
[507]. See Roland Puccetti, "The Loving God: Some Observations on John Hick's *Evil and the God of Love*." *Religious Studies* 2, no. 2 (April 1967): 255–68.
[508]. See H. J. McCloskey, "God and Evil," *Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (April 1960): 97–114, repr. in Nelson Pike, ed., *God and Evil* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964).
[509]. See Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, trans. Jean Oesterle (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).
[510]. Sophisticated atheists often do not push this argument against God. See Terence Penelhum, *Religion and Rationality* (New York: Random House, 1971), 230–33.
[511]. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 69.
[512]. See discussion in Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), chap. 4.
[513]. See Shubert Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 17.
[514]. This criticism and the following one also come from panentheists. See critique at end of chap. 12.
[515]. This kind of argument is generally found in the context of those who wish to prove that the world is eternal, as in the Latin Averroist of the thirteenth century, Siger of Brabant (in *On the Eternity of the World*).
[516]. See Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pt. 4, chap. 1.
[517]. See C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1940), chap. 8; *The Great Divorce* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), chap. 13; *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), chap. 6.
[518]. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: Norton, 1975), chap. 6.
[519]. Antony Flew with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There Is a God* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2007), 93.
[520]. Paul Vitz, *Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism* (Dallas: Spence, 1999).
[521]. Nietzsche, "The Madman," in *Gay Science*, 125 (emphasis added).
[522]. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*.
[523]. See Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), chap. 4.
[524]. Francis Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 38.

[525]. Jean-Paul Sartre, cited in *National Review*, June 1982, 677.
[526]. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1957), 9–12, 16.
[527]. Marx and Engels, *On Religion*, 41.
[528]. Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 112–13.
[529]. See William Dembski, *The Design of Life: Discovering Signs of Intelligence in Biological Systems* (Dallas: Foundation for Thought and Ethics, 2008), and Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).
[530]. See F. R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), reprinted in part in John Hick, *The Existence of God* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).
[531]. See John Barlow, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), and Guillermo Gonzalez, *The Privileged Planet* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004), 120–36.
[532]. Fred Hoyle and N. C. Wickramasinghe, *Evolution from Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), 143.
[533]. See Wilder Smith, *Man's Origin, Man's Destiny* (Wheaton, IL: H. Shaw, 1968), 66–67.
[534]. See Meyer, *Signature in the Cell*, 341, 347.
[535]. Theists too have recognized the harm done to the theistic cause via the principle of sufficient reason. See John E. Gurr, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason in Some Scholastic Systems, 1750–1900* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1959).
[536]. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 45.
[537]. Flew, *There Is a God*, 183.

Chapter 15. Theism

[538]. The term *cause* in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, means *efficient cause* (that by which something comes to be), as opposed to *instrumental cause* (that through which something comes to be) or *final cause* (that for which something comes to be), or any other kind of cause (like material, formal, or exemplar).
[539]. For a similar form of this cosmological argument see Norman L. Geisler and Winfried Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), chap. 9.
[540]. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), secs. 194–95.
[541]. Many nontheists ask how God can "make something from nothing." But many of the same nontheists (i.e., those who accept big bang cosmology) believe that "nothing produced something" in the beginning (see Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways: Saint Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* [New York: Schocken Books, 1969], 66). An all-powerful being can do anything that is possible, and there is no contradiction involved in affirming that a contingent being (which was nothing prior to its creation) can be caused by a necessary Being.
[542]. This argument is an amplification of Thomas Aquinas's argument in *De Ente et Essentia* (*On Being and Essence*, chap. 4). See translation by Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1968).
[543]. Even theists sometimes miss the force and importance of this distinction. See Keith Yandell, *Basic Issues in the Philosophy of Religion* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1971), 84.
[544]. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1947–48), 1a 44, 1, and John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings: A Selection*, ed. and trans. Allan Wolter (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1962), 44–45.
[545]. Aquinas saw this in *De Ente et Essentia* (*On Being and Essence*). He speaks only ad hoc to the problem of an infinite regress elsewhere in his writings in order to show it is impossible.
[546]. What follows here is the valid and supplementary role the teleological argument plays in showing what kind of Cause is proved by the cosmological argument (i.e., a *knowing*, *purposeful* cause).
[547]. See Geisler and Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion*, chap. 12.
[548]. What follows here is the valid and supplementary role the moral argument serves in showing that the God proved by this cosmological argument is also a morally good kind of being.
[549]. See Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), chap. 1.
[550]. For further elaboration on the biblical attributes of God see Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, pt. 1.
[551]. For a more complete critique of Hume and Kant see Geisler and Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion*, 208–24.
[552]. See Norman L. Geisler, "The Missing Premise in the Ontological Argument," *Religious Studies* 9, no. 3 (September 1973): 289–96.
[553]. For discussion of irreducible complexity, see Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Free Press, 2006).
[554]. For discussion of specified complexity, see Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).
[555]. See Fred Hoyle and N. C. Wickramasinghe, *Evolution from Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism.* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981).

[556]. See R. Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Norton, 1978).
[557]. See G. Gonzalez, *The Privileged Planet* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2004).
[558]. See David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).
[559]. See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1955), 327–28.
[560]. See Bruce Reichenbach, *The Cosmological Argument* (Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1972), 100–102.
[561]. See Allan B. Wolter, *The Transcendentals and Their Function in the Metaphysics of Duns Scotus* (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute, 1946), 44.
[562]. See Kai Nielsen, *Contemporary Critiques of Religion* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), chaps. 2 and 3.
[563]. For further discussion on the meaningfulness of the positive attributes of God, see chap. 12 of Geisler and Corduan, *Philosophy of Religion*.
[564]. St. Anselm made this point in his reply to Gaunilo.
[565]. See Milton K. Munitz, *The Mystery of Existence: An Essay in Philosophical Cosmology* (New York: New York University Press, 1974), 103–25.
[566]. Some view this kind of argument as a transcendental argument. If so, positing God is more than a rational presupposition; it is an undeniably necessary reality condition for all contingent existence.

Part 3: Christian Apologetics

[567]. In this context the work of Edward J. Carnell is most helpful. See *Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), chaps. 3, 6.

Chapter 16. Naturalism and the Supernatural

[568]. For more on the various types of apologetics see Norman L. Geisler, "Apologetics, Types of," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).
[569]. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 109.
[570]. Baruch Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise* (1670; repr. New York: Dover, 1951).
[571]. David Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. C. W. Hendel (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), sec. 10, pt. 1.
[572]. Ibid., book 10.
[573]. See Norman L. Geisler, "God, Alleged Disproofs of," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics,* 275–76.
[574]. See Antony Flew, "Miracles," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan and The Free Press, 1967), 5:346–53.
[575]. Antony Flew, "Theology and Falsification," in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press, 1955), 99.
[576]. See Flew, "Miracles," 352.
[577]. See R. M. Hare, "Theology and Falsification," in Flew and MacIntyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, 100.
[578]. Antony Flew, *There Is a God* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 183.
[579]. Ibid., 157.
[580]. Ibid., 187.
[581]. Ibid., 213.
[582]. Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, 1:83, 87, 92.
[583]. Flew, "Miracles," 349; and Doug Geivett and Gary Habermas, eds., *In Defense of Miracles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997).
[584]. A naturalist would be hard pressed to prove that any event in nature is caused by natural law. If "laws" are merely descriptions, then laws can't cause anything any more than arithmetic causes ten pennies in one's pocket because one can add up the number accurately. See C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 77.
[585]. Guy Robinson, "Miracles," in *Ratio* 9 (December 1967): 155–66.
[586]. Richard Lewontin, review in *New York Review of Books*, 9 January 1996 (emphasis added).
[587]. See Lewis, *Miracles*, 61.
[588]. Alastair McKinnon, "'Miracle' and 'Paradox,'" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 4 (October 1967): 308–14.
[589]. Hume, *Inquiry*, sec. 10, pt. 2.
[590]. Flew, "Miracles," 348–49.
[591]. SETI stands for "Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence." Carl Sagan's movie *Contact* was based on the premise that such intelligence exists. When an intelligently selected pattern of numbers (only prime numbers between 1 and 100) is received from outer space, it is concluded that some intelligent being(s) sent it (see Carl Sagan, *Broca's Brain* [New York: Random House, 1979], 275, where he claims that "a single message from space would show that it is possible [for the transmitting civilization] to live through such technological adolescence").

[592]. ID stand for "Intelligent Design" of life, which has been shown to be a legitimate science by William Dembski (see *The Design of Life* [Dallas: Foundation of Thought and Ethics, 2008]), Stephen Meyer (see *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* [New York: HarperOne, 2009]), and others.

[593]. In scripture quotations italics for emphasis have been added.

[594]. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 6th ed. (New York: Modern Library, 1993), 154.

[595]. Even the one so-called negative miracle of Jesus (cursing the fig tree—Mark 11:12–14, 20–21) was done to bring good to Israel—namely, to remind them of their impending doom if they did not repent and accept their Messiah.

[596]. Lewis, *Miracles*, 138.

[597]. See Norman L. Geisler, "Apollonius of Tyana," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 44–45.

[598]. Hume, *Inquiry*, sec. 10, pt. 1.

[599]. Ibid., sec. 10, pt. 1, n. 20.

[600]. Ibid., sec. 10, pt. 2.

[601]. Bertrand Russell, "What Is an Agnostic?" *Look* (November 1953).

[602]. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 154.

[603]. Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 125, 131.

[604]. Letters to the Editor, *Time*, 4 June 1979.

Chapter 17. Objectivism and History

[605]. See Charles Beard, "That Noble Dream," in *The Varieties of History*, ed. Fritz Stern (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 323–25. The basic discussion here follows, for the most part, an excellent summary found in an unpublished master's thesis by William Lane Craig, "The Nature of History: An Exposition of the Critique of the Principal Argument for Historical Relativism, as Propounded by Carl Becker and Charles Beard." Unpublished PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1976.

[606]. Carl L. Becker, "What Are Historical Facts?" in *The Philosophy of History in Our Time*, ed. Hans Meryerhoff (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959), 131.

[607]. To be adequate and accurate a historical presentation does not have to be either totally comprehensive or unrevisable. One can always learn more and improve a limited but accurate account.

[608]. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Knopf, 1953), 50.

[609]. Charles Beard, "That Noble Dream," in *The Varieties of History*, ed. Fritz Richard Stern (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1956), 323.

[610]. Edward Carr, *What Is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 20.

[611]. Beard, "That Noble Dream," 324.

[612]. See R. G. Collingwood, "The Limits of Historical Knowledge," in *Essays in the Philosophy of History*, ed. William Debbins (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 100.

[613]. Charles Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," in Meyerhoff, *Philosophy of History*, 150–51.

[614]. See Ernest Nagel, "The Logic of Historical Analysis," in Meyerhoff, *Philosophy of History*, 208.

[615]. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," in Meyerhoff, *Philosophy of History*, 151.

[616]. See Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 150–51.

[617]. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 24.

[618]. W. H. Dray, *Philosophy of History* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 23.

[619]. See Herbert Butterfield, "Moral Judgments in History," in Meyerhoff, *Philosophy of History*, 244.

[620]. See Henri Pirenne, "What Are Historians Trying to Do?" in Meyerhoff, *Philosophy of History*, 97.

[621]. R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, ed. T. M. Know (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), 248.

[622]. See Maurice Mandelbaum, *The Problem of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 94.

[623]. For further discussion on this point, see Norman L. Geisler, *Creation in the Courts* (Wheaton: IL: Crossway, 2007), 269–70.

[624]. Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica and University of Chicago Press, 1952), 541–76.

[625]. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 189.

[626]. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 89, 41, 42.

[627]. See Martin Kähler, *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic, Biblical Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), 63.

[628]. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper, 1957), 87.

[629]. See Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann, *Myth and Christianity* (New York: Noonday Press, 1958), 16–17.

[630]. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

[631]. Ian Ramsey, *Religious Language* (London: SCM, 1957), 118–19, 122.

[632]. Ibid., chap. 1.

[633]. Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man* (New York: Harper, 1957), 90.

[634]. E. Troeltsch, "Historiography," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925–35).
[635]. Carl Becker, "Detachment and the Writing of History," in *Detachment and the Writing of History*, ed. Phil L. Snyder (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958), 12–13.
[636]. F. H. Bradley, *The Presuppositions of Critical History* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 100.
[637]. Richard Whately, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte* (1843; repr. Berkeley: Scholar's Press, 1985).
[638]. Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Norton, 1978), 14.
[639]. Robert Jastrow, "A Scientist Caught between Two Faiths," *Christianity Today*, 6 August 1982, 8.
[640]. Gerald Joyce and Leslie Orgel, *The RNA World*, cited in David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 202.
[641]. Charles Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," in Meyerhoff, *Philosophy of History*, 138 (emphasis added).
[642]. Ibid., 200–201.
[643]. Ibid., 190–196, 200–201.
[644]. Ibid., 213.
[645]. W. H. Walsh, "'Explaining What' in History," in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (New York: The Free Press, 1942), 301.
[646]. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," in Meyerhoff, *Philosophy*, 148.
[647]. See Gary Habermas, "Philosophy of History," in *Evangelical Apologetics*, ed. Michael Bauman (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1996), 105.

Chapter 18. The Historical Reliability of the New Testament

[648]. For further information see Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), chaps. 20–27.
[649]. See F. W. Hall, "Manuscript Authorities for the Text of the Chief Classical Writers," in *Companion to Classical Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), and Bruce Metzger, *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963).
[650]. Metzger, *History of New Testament Textual Criticism*, 144–46.
[651]. See "Bart Ehrman and Millions of Variants," pt. 1 of 2 posted 16 September 2010 (www.truefreethinker.com).
[652]. Bart Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 55 (emphasis added).
[653]. Frederic Kenyon, *The Bible and Archaeology* (New York: Harper, 1940), 288.
[654]. Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* (New York: Harper, 1958), 55.
[655]. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 506.
[656]. William Lane Craig, *The Son Rises* (Chicago: Moody, 1981), 101.
[657]. C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 209 (emphasis added).
[658]. John Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 352–54.
[659]. W. F. Albright, "Toward a More Conservative View," *Christianity Today*, 18 January 1963.
[660]. A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 187, 189 (emphasis added).
[661]. Ibid., 189.
[662]. See Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), for a reconciliation of the alleged contradictions in the Gospels.
[663]. Simon Greenleaf, *The Testimony of the Evangelists* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1846), 53–54.
[664]. Ibid., 46.
[665]. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959), 31.
[666]. Donald J. Wiseman, "Archaeological Confirmation of the Old Testament," in C. F. Henry, *Revelation and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 301–2.
[667]. For a discussion of these and other archaeological finds see Joseph Holden and Norman L. Geisler, *The Popular Handbook of Biblical Archaeology* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2012).
[668]. G. A. Williamson, *The World of Josephus* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), 290.
[669]. William M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1865), 8.
[670]. William F. Albright, "Retrospect and Prospect in New Testament Archaeology," in *The Teacher's Yoke*, ed. E. Jerry Vardaman (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 1964), 29.
[671]. F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins outside the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).
[672]. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 104.
[673]. Ibid., 14.
[674]. See Geisler and Howe, *Big Book of Bible Difficulties*.

[675]. These criticisms are an expansion on criticisms made by Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 149–51.

[676]. The Delphi Inscription (also called Gallio Inscription at Delphi) (ca. 52 CE) was discovered in the early twentieth century at the Temple of Apollo in Delphi, Greece. Its mention of Gallio provides an important marker in the life of the apostle Paul (see Acts 18:12–14).

[677]. See Bruce, *New Testament Documents*, 80–92.

[678]. See Harold W. Hoehner, "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 131 (October 1974): 338–51.

[679]. For a critical introduction to the New Testament Apocrypha, to which the terms *folklore* and *myth* are more fitly applied, see Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963–66).

Chapter 19. The Claim for the Deity and Authority of Jesus Christ

[680]. See Philip Payne, "Jesus' Implicit Claim to Deity in His Parables," *Trinity Journal* 2 (Spring, 1981): 2–23.

[681]. See Norman L. Geisler and Patrick Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), chap. 5.

[682]. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus "is the first and direct creation of Jehovah God" (*The Kingdom Is at Hand* [New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1944], 46–47). They add, "Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God" (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* [New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989]).

[683]. Nicene Creed, AD 325.

[684]. Ibid.

[685]. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 14.

[686]. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1943), 55–56.

Chapter 20. The Evidence for the Deity and Authority of Jesus Christ

[687]. See Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

[688]. See S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 497.

[689]. See chap. 16 for further definition of a miracle.

[690]. See Marvin Bittinger, *The Faith Equation* (Chicago: Advantage Books, 2011), 116–18.

[691]. H. J. Schonfield, *The Passover Plot* (New York: Random House, 1965).

[692]. For a definitive critique of Schonfield's *The Passover Plot* see Edwin M. Yamauchi's "Passover Plot or Easter Triumph?," in John W. Montgomery, *Christianity for the Tough-Minded* (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1973), 261–71.

[693]. J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 665–68.

[694]. Andre Lamont, *Nostradamus Sees All* (Philadelphia: W. Foulsham, 1942), 252.

[695]. Ibid.

[696]. See J. Randi, "Nostradamus: The Prophet for All Seasons," *Skeptical Enquirer* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1982): 30–37).

[697]. See Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*.

[698]. See André Kole and Al Janssen, *Miracles or Magic?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1987).

[699]. See Richard Grenier, *The Gandhi Nobody Knows* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983).

[700]. See Horace Bushnell, *The Character of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910).

[701]. Cited in Habermas, *The Historical Jesus* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1996), 186 (from the Arabic translation of Josephus).

[702]. Bushnell, *The Character of Jesus*, 66, 77.

[703]. See Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 36.

[704]. David Hume, *An Inquiry concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), sec. 10.

[705]. The medical evidence of Christ's death has been substantiated by the work of physicians. Compare John M. MacCormac, et al., *On the Physiological Cause of Christ's Death* (Belfast: Charles W. Olley, 1890).

[706]. W. D. Edwards, W. J. Gabel, and F. E. Hosmer, "On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, no. 11 (21 March 1986): 1463.

[707]. The Greek tenses of these last two passages, from John's epistles, show that the passages refer to Christ still being in the flesh now after his resurrection and ascension.

[708]. Some key verses for the order of events are as follows. First Corinthians 15:5–8 lists the separate appearances as occurring in the following order: to Peter, to the Twelve, to five hundred brothers, to James, to all the apostles, and to Paul. Luke 24:34 asserts that Jesus appeared to Peter before he appeared to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and before he later appeared to the eleven (Luke 24:33–36). John 21:1–14 declares that the appearance to the seven apostles at the Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee; cf. 6:1) was the third appearance to his disciples as a group (21:14). Mark 16:9 affirms that Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all say the women were at the empty tomb first. Mark 16:9 affirms that the first appearance was to Mary Magdalene. John 21:1–13 implies this also.

[709]. Many skeptics have become Christians after examining the evidence for the resurrection of Christ. One of the most convincing books by a converted skeptic is that of Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

[710]. David Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus* (London: Edinburgh, Williams, and Norgate, 1865), 1:412.

[711]. James Tabor, *The Jesus Dynasty* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 234.

Chapter 21. The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

[712]. These are set forth in Norman L. Geisler and Ron Rhodes, *Conviction without Compromise* (Eugene: OR: Harvest House, 2008), pt. 1.

[713]. For a more complete discussion on the Bible's claim for its own inspiration see Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), chaps. 1–9; or Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How We Got Our Bible* (1974; rev. ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 2012), chaps. 1–5.

[714]. In some biblical quotations italics for emphasis have been added.

[715]. The Talmud and Jewish Bibles today number them as twenty-four, but Josephus and others combine Ruth with Judges and Lamentations with Jeremiah, making the number twenty-two. See Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.8.

[716]. For support of the belief in absolute morals see Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), pt. 1, especially chaps. 1–2.

[717]. An excellent exposition of Christ's verification of the Old Testament is found in John W. Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, 3rd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009).

[718]. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), 594.

[719]. See also chap. 15 above on why God must be infinite.

[720]. Since all that Jesus taught came from the Father (John 8:26–28), it is possible that this occasional supernormal knowledge came to Christ by revelation from God.

[721]. This does not mean that the Bible was verbally dictated, as some have mistakenly taught (cf. John R. Rice, *Our God-Breathed Book: The Bible* [Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1969], 265–67, 281–91). One can easily recognize stylistic differences in Scripture, which indicate that God used the various personalities and vocabularies of the authors.

[722]. Bart Ehrman, *Whose Word Is It? The Story Behind Who Changed the New Testament and Why* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 55.

[723]. See A. T. Robertson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (Toronto: T. Whittaker, 1887), 22.

[724]. Philip Schaff, *Companion to the Greek Testament and the English Version* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1883), 177.

[725]. For a fuller treatment of the canonicity of Scripture see Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible*, chaps. 10–15; Geisler and Nix, *From God to Us*, chaps. 6–10.

[726]. Sometimes Baruch (which has six chapters) is divided into two books, Baruch (chaps. 1–5) and the Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch 6).

[727]. Augustine, *City of God* 17.36.

[728]. Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.83.

[729]. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 7–8, 24.

[730]. For further support of this point see R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971).

[731]. See Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible* (chap. 11), for further elaboration on these points.

[732]. During the time of the apostles and under their authority, there were also New Testament "prophets" who were associates of the apostles. They too received revelation from God. Some of these, like Luke (an associate of the apostle Paul) and Mark (an associate of the apostle Peter), wrote inspired books. So did the writer of Hebrews, who knew the apostles (Heb. 2:3–4) and associates of the apostles like Timothy (Heb. 13:23). Jude (1:1) and James (1:1) were brothers of Jesus (Matt. 13:55) and were also part of the apostolic circle.

[733]. See Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 310–14.

[734]. See Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible*, chap. 15; Geisler and Nix, *From God to Us*, chap. 10.

[735]. See Everett F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), vol. 4.

[736]. There is no evidence that it was excluded by the early fathers, but we have no record of anyone who had occasion to cite it in writing.

[737]. The word for "many" in Greek (*polloi*) can mean two or more, and there are only two other known written Gospels from the first century, Matthew and Mark.

[738]. The words translated "I wrote" in this verse may be an "epistolary aorist," a use of the aorist verb tense that refers to the very letter in which it is written, with emphasis on the event. It is like saying, "I am now emphatically writing to you." Although the aorist tense in Greek can refer to past events, the aorist tense as such does not stress the time of the action but the kind of action. Paul used this form elsewhere in 1 Corinthians (9:15), so there is no reason he cannot be using it here. So there may not have been any other Corinthian correspondence from Paul.

[739]. See Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 311.

[740]. James E. Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1971), 479, calls "justification by faith" a "pernicious doctrine." Jesus is a god for Mormons only in the same sense in which we are gods (Brigham Young,

Journal of Discourses [Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1854], 1, 51). He is actually the brother of Lucifer (*Doctrine and Covenants* 76:25–26).

[741]. See Qur'an, Surah 4:157, 171.

[742]. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God Be True* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1946), 101; and *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* (Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1951).

[743]. See J. E. Esslemont, *Bahá'U'lláh and the New Era* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing, 1970), 102, 127, 135–36.

[744]. See *The Mo Letters* [Moses David] (Hong Kong: Gold Lion Publishers, 1976).

[745]. Esslemont, *Bahá'U'lláh*, 197.

[746]. This is documented in Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 32–33.

[747]. The discovery of this talisman came to light in a revealing, unpublished historical paper given at Nauvoo, IL, 20 April 1974, by Mormon historian Reed Durham and titled "Is There No Help for the Widow's Son?"

[748]. See Tanner and Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, chap. 14.

[749]. See Ron Rhodes, *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Jehovah's Witnesses* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), 350. Many more false predictions have been made since. For example, 1941—"Receiving the gift [which is] . . . the Lord's provided instruments for most effective work in the remaining months before Armageddon" (*Watchtower*, 15 September 1941, 288); 1968—"True, there have been those in times past who predicted an 'end to the world,' even announcing a specific date. Yet nothing happened. The 'end' did not come. They were guilty of false prophesying? What was missing? . . . Missing from such people were God's truths and evidence that he was pursuing and guiding them" (*Awake*, 8 October 1968); 1968—"Why Are You Looking Forward to 1975?" (*Watchtower*, 1 August 1968, 494).

[750]. Esslemont, *Bahá'U'lláh*, 144.

[751]. The closure of all "normative" revelation does not mean God cannot give private "revelations" for the guidance of believers. But whatever there may be of these, they are not normative, infallible, or binding on other believers.

[752]. For the other essential doctrines of the Christian faith, see Geisler and Rhodes, *Conviction without Compromise* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2008), pt. 1.

[753]. Augustine, *Letters* 82.3 in vol. 3 of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff (1886–89; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994).

[754]. Thomas Aquinas, *On Truth* (Chicago: H. Regnery, 1952–54), 14, 10 and 14, 11.

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